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the weekly Standard

FEBRUARY 8, 2010 • $4.95

CAN REPUBLICANS GOVERN?
JEFF BERGNER

...& WHY OBAMA CAN'T
HARVEY MANSFIELD

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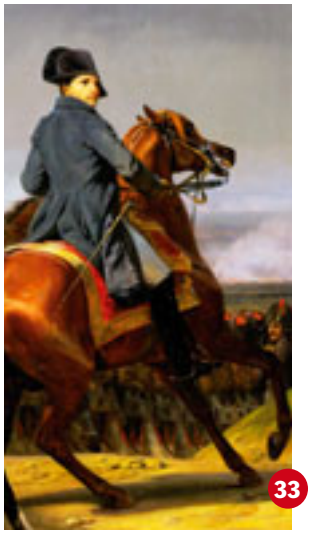

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Journalists Go Green—But Not With Envy!

For years now, sensitive and intelligent members of the Washington journalistic community (we'll name no names!) have wondered what makes the annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner so mortifying to decent people everywhere—such an embarrassment to the journalism business, to the city, to our great nation itself.

Is it the terrible food, the watered-down drinks, the suffocating crowds, the cheesy ballroom? Or is it simply the self-importance of the thing—the spectacle of the nation's political reporters dressing up in ill-fitting tuxes and ballgowns and demanding that the president of the United States come to their dinner, eat their food, and then do a stand-up routine making fun of himself and flattering his hosts? Could be.

Or maybe it's the self-congratulation—the journalists' shameless and apparently indestructible need to give awards to one another, in a kind of daisy chain without end? That's a possibility, too.

Or wait: Maybe it's the pathetic self-abnegation, which bumps right up against the self-congratulation—the sight of gainfully employed and supposedly independent-minded adults falling all over themselves to grab a cellphone camera shot of . . . oh, take your pick: Bob Barker, Paula Abdul, Bruce Jenner, Rahm Emmanuel, failed sitcom stars, superannuated movie actors, benchwarming sports figures, the lower orders of national celebrity. Very likely.

Or is it that the event just emits too darn much CO_2?

Wanda Sykes delights 2009 dinner guests

That last one, we admit, had not occurred to us until last week, when we read an announcement issued by the White House Correspondents' Association about this year's dinner, which will be held May 1. We quote from it liberally:

> And for the first time in its 96-year history, the association is taking action to reduce the carbon impact of its annual black-tie gala; these actions include using as much as possible renewable energy for the event, paper products, supplies and services that reduce the threat of global warming, deforestation, toxic wastes, hazardous chemicals and species extinction.
>
> "This will be the most eco-friendly dinner ever hosted by the association," said Edwin Chen, the group's president and a Bloomberg News White House correspondent.
>
> "And we encourage our members and guests to join in that effort, such as by car-pooling, using hybrid vehicles and, for long-distance travelers to Washington, buying carbon-offsets," Chen said.

There's that self-congratulation again. But never mind. Make no mistake, as the president says; let us not be misunderstood. We have ourselves seen with our own eyes, and heard with our own ears, the emission of tons of life-threatening gases at past correspondents' dinners. And while Chen's "eco-friendly" reforms won't make the gala any less of an embarrassment, we applaud the members' efforts to make a dent in their carbon production, thereby preventing the extinction of every species except *Journo Americanus*.

Besides, using paper napkins is a small price to pay for the thrill of seeing Helen Thomas pull up to the Washington Hilton on a bicycle. ♦

If You Only Knew the Power of the Stimulus

Why is *Time* columnist Joe Klein so angry? Because most Americans believe the stimulus failed: "It is very difficult to have a democracy without citizens," he complains. "It is impossible to be a citizen if you don't make an effort to understand the most basic activities of your government. It is very difficult to thrive in an increasingly competitive world if you're a nation of dodos."

This probably isn't the response liberal Democrats should have to public disapproval of the Obama agenda. As Matthew Continetti noted at weeklystandard.com, "To date, the Obama White House has been careful not to blame the American people for the Democrats' failures. Obama campaigned on a promise to redeem America from Bush, to make the government live up to its citizenry. But his agenda has polarized the electorate and soured the public on the president and his party."

So why shouldn't Americans believe the stimulus failed? "The administration backed the stimulus with the explicit promise that unemployment would be held to 8 percent if the bill passed," writes Continetti. "Didn't happen. It is no doubt true that unemployment would have been worse without the stimulus—state and local governments would have had to lay off

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many people without federal aid to the states, for example—but parties do not win elections with the slogan, 'Hey, it could've been worse!' The stimulus was sold to the public under the banner of economic recovery. And while stimulus measures help boost short-term economic growth by bringing demand forward, the recovery is neither strong nor durable. A jobs plan that does not produce jobs growth is not a success."

As for Klein, "He harks back to the tradition of liberals blaming others for their own failures. What was significant about President Carter's malaise speech was its implication that there was something wrong with America which prevented him from having a successful presidency. Obama knows better. But, if he follows Klein's lead, it will be only a few years before he gives a malaise speech of his own. And if that happens, the clock will begin to count down the remaining seconds of his one—and only—term." ♦

THE STATE OF THE UNION

Hang 'em High

We pause to note the passing last week of General Ali Hassan al-Majid, 68, hanged in Baghdad pursuant to his eight death sentences for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Better known as Chemical Ali for his zealous killing of Kurdish Iraqis by means of mustard gas, sarin, tabun, and VX, Majid was buried near his cousin Saddam Hussein and Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, in Tikrit, their shared hometown.

Uneducated and personally ruthless, Majid served Saddam wherever an iron fist was needed—as head of the secret police, as military governor of Iraqi-occupied Kuwait, as interior minister charged with crushing the Shiite uprising after the Gulf war in 1991. Arguably his most revolting accomplishment was the Anfal campaign in the late 1980s to suppress Kurdish demands for autonomy. His men looted, then razed, more than 4,000 Kurdish villages, displacing a million people. Males of an age to bear arms they rounded up and massacred. The prosecutors put the number of dead at 180,000.

At Majid's first trial, some tape-recorded conversations were played for the court. In one, from 1988, the general was heard telling senior Baath party officials his plans for the Kurds: "I will kill them all with chemical weapons! Who is going to say anything? The international community? F— them!"

The general was right, but only in the short term. Fifteen years later, the international community roused itself in the form the American-led coalition of the willing that toppled the tyrant. Now at last, Chemical Ali has had his comeuppance at the hands of a democratic Iraq. ♦

Something's Rotten in Denmark

The attempted axe-murder of Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard has been widely reported. On January 1, a 28-year-old Somali Muslim hacked his way through the door of Westergaard's house near Aarhus and when police arrived was attempting to do the same to the reinforced "safe room" where Westergaard had retreated.

Less widely reported is the shameful aftermath, in which Danes have cravenly ostracized the artist.

Westergaard is one of a dozen Dan-

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ish cartoonists who depicted Mohammed for the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005, for a feature on self-censorship that later touched off deadly riots around the world and the torching of three Danish embassies in the Middle East. There have been numerous death threats against all the artists. Two Pakistani immigrants, one American and one Canadian, were arrested in Chicago in October and charged with planning an attack on the newspaper.

After his narrow escape, Westergaard donated a watercolor painting to a charity auction hosted by a Danish TV program, with the proceeds to be devoted to earthquake relief in Haiti. But the Lauritz auction house got cold feet and refused to auction his art. "The drawing was in no way controversial, but it seems my name is. I'm sorry for the fear it causes people. When even my hairdresser, who is Muslim, told me with sadness that she didn't dare keep me on as a customer for fear of reprisals, then there's reason to be sad about this development," the 72-year-old artist told reporters in Copenhagen.

The Danish prime minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, to his credit chastised Lauritz. But defenders of Westergaard are becoming rarer. And there is worse: Karen Thisted, a columnist in the leading tabloid *Ekstrabladet*, blamed Westergaard for his own troubles. Her January 5 column ran under the headline, "You Are a Coward, Kurt Westergaard." She accused him of a "constant urge for self-promotion. . . . It has got nothing to do with freedom of speech to keep shouting about oneself and one's artistic rights, and it irritates me intensely that we Danes have to suffer just because Kurt Westergard can't get enough of his five minutes of fame." The column concludes: "You suffer from the compulsive idea that you are personally engaged in a heroic fight on behalf of freedom of speech."

Seems there are plenty of cowards (and worse, in the case of Thisted) in Denmark, but Westergaard isn't one of them. A friend of The Scrapbook in Denmark notes that none of the papers there in their coverage of the axe attack dared reprint the cartoon.

On a happier note: Galleri Draupner in Skanderborg stepped up and auctioned Westergaard's watercolor, raising 100,000 Danish krones ($19,000) for earthquake victims. ♦

Promises, Promises

'I am absolutely certain that generations from now, we will be able to look back and tell our children that this was the moment when we began to provide care for the sick and good jobs to the jobless; this was the moment when the rise of the oceans began to slow and our planet began to heal."
—*Barack Obama, June 3, 2008* ♦

'I never thought the mere fact of my election would usher in peace, harmony, and some postpartisan era."
—*Barack Obama, January 27, 2010* ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'President Obama's State of the Union address didn't signal a political shift to the left or the right. It sounded more like a shrewd attempt to move from the inside to the outside—to position himself alongside disaffected voters, peering through the windows of the den of iniquity called Washington and . . . " (Eugene Robinson, *Washington Post*, January 29). ♦

'Maybe it's just me, but I've found the last few weeks in American politics particularly unnerving. . . . " (Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times*, January 27). ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

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Babes in Toyland

Not surprisingly, a network's decision to yank a popular host from his time slot and replace him with someone who lacks the same broad appeal has resulted in controversy. The network to which I'm referring is Sprout, a 24-hour children's channel operated by PBS.

The segment in question is *The Sunny Side Up Show*, a morning program featuring a trio of hosts who spend time at the Sunshine Barn with a puppet chicken named Chica. Over Christmas, one of the hosts, Kevin Yamada, was replaced by Dennisha Pratt. When I discovered this, it bothered me no end. Why had it happened? Had he been fired? And why did I care? After all, my almost-two-year-old son didn't seem to notice.

Indeed it was a level of interest I usually reserve for shows like *The Sopranos* or *Mad Men*. And I'm not alone. After learning what had transpired—in a farewell episode, Kevin explained to Chica that he was "moving to the big city"—I came across a comment section on Sprout's website. It had been flooded by irate parents demanding Kevin's return to his rightful place.

"Are you trying to emulate NBC?" asked someone named Gabe. "If something works, do not change it!!! Bring Kevin back or my family will never watch Sprout again!"

Randy, another father, went further: "Our son loves Kevin and is so sad now that he cannot see him any longer! He knew something was wrong right away. . . . We plan on writing to Sprout, calling, doing whatever it takes to get Kevin back on. . . . The girl they have on there now seems fake and we cannot stand her arm movements while singing 'Happy happy birthday to you.' Too stiff and fake. Sorry, it's the truth. KEVIN, PLEASE COME BACK!!!"

Unhinged, you say? Why don't we get a life? Or better yet, turn the television off and teach our children to read. Give them some paper and crayons. Let their imaginations bloom.

Fair enough. Yet there are times when you just need to get things done around the house. Or maybe you are just plain tired. Either way, plopping your child in front of a TV, though certainly not ideal, can be useful. (At least he's not coloring the walls or dropping coins through the floor vents.) The problem is, as a parent, you inevitably end up watching more than your fair share of these shows and sadly end up knowing way more than you should—like the lyrics to "Make Way For Noddy."

Of course we exercise restraint. Our children will not watch as much TV as I did growing up—this included whatever was on HBO, such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *The Omen II*, and *Coma*. They can either watch sports or a children's channel—Sprout or Nick Jr.

DAVID GOTHARD

Overall, Nick Jr. (short for Nickelodeon) is the smarter of the two, with clever shows like *Wonder Pets!*, *Little Bill*, and even *Blue's Clues* reruns (in case you're wondering, we prefer Steve to Joe—but who doesn't?). On the other hand, Nick Jr. also features the incredibly annoying *Dora the Explorer*.

As for Sprout, other than *The Sunny Side Up Show* and *Thomas & Friends*, there isn't much we look forward to. The worst of the lot is *Dragon Tales*, an utterly mind-numbing cartoon that, we are reminded at the opening of each episode, "is funded in part by a grant from the Department of Education."

But there is one notable exception: *The Goodnight Show* starring Nina and Star (the latter is a plush puppet). I've discovered that I'm not the only one devoted to the show. So are two of my colleagues, one of whom isn't even a father but claims to watch because of his "niece." Nina is a pajama-clad Latina actress whose real name is Michele Lepe. She has long brown hair, dark, alluring eyes, and an inviting smile. "Even her hands are attractive," said my coworker. He's right. Nina sings and makes all sorts of arts and crafts. She also performs yoga—for the kids, of course.

Taking a step back from parenting duties, I recognize the reaction to the change at *The Sunny Side Up Show* is laughable. As one mother put it: "This is a kid channel that we allow our children to watch so we can have a break!! What do you all care who hosts *The Sunny Side Up Show*?!" She's right. We parents need to get a grip.

On the other hand, if Sprout ever decides to replace Nina, I, along with thousands of other dads, will be taking to the streets and burning cars until justice is done.

Victorino Matus

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Don't Mess With Success

In his State of the Union address, Barack Obama worried that "too many of our citizens have lost faith" in "our biggest institutions." Many of those institutions have, of course, invited disillusionment with their feckless and irresponsible behavior. But poll after poll shows that at least one major American institution retains citizens' faith. Indeed, this institution has improved its standing in recent years as respect for others has declined. That institution is the U.S. military.

So what institution does the president want to subject to an untested, unnecessary, and probably unwise social experiment? The U.S. military.

"This year," the president informed us, "I will work with Congress and our military to finally repeal the law that denies gay Americans the right to serve the country they love because of who they are."

It's hard to know where that "finally" came from. Until a year ago, Americans had elected presidents who were in favor of upholding "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"—so if action on this has been overdue, it's only been for the single year of the Obama presidency.

But the repeal is something that Obama campaigned on. He believes in it. But with all due respect to his sincerely held if abstractly formed views on this subject, it would be reckless to require the military to carry out a major sociological change, one contrary to the preferences of a large majority of its members, as it fights two wars. What's more, it isn't a change an appreciable number of Americans are clamoring for. And even if one understood this change to be rectifying an injustice, the fact is it's an injustice that affects perhaps a few thousand people in a nation of 300 million.

But, "It's the right thing to do," said the president.

Here is contemporary liberalism in a nutshell: No need to consider costs as well as benefits. No acknowledgment of competing goods or coexisting rights. No appreciation of the constraints of public sentiment or the challenges of organizational complexity. No sense that not every part of society can be treated dogmatically according to certain simple propositions. Just the assertion that something must be done because it is in some abstract way "the right thing."

John McCain's response to Obama's statement was that of a grown-up: "This successful policy has been in effect for over 15 years, and it is well understood and predominantly supported by our military at all levels. We have the best trained, best equipped, and most professional force in the history of our country, and the men and women in uniform are performing heroically in two wars. At a time when our Armed Forces are fighting and sacrificing on the battlefield, now is not the time to abandon the policy." Whatever its muddled origins and theoretical deficiencies, the fact is "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" works pretty well at accommodating the complex demands of a war-ready military nestled in a liberal society.

The advocates of repeal say, it's a matter of basic rights. No, it's not. Leave aside the fact that there are difficult and unresolved questions of how our society should deal in various areas of public policy with questions of sexual orientation. There is no basic right to serve in the military. That's why forms of discrimination we would ban in civilian life are permitted: Women have less opportunity to fight than men. The disabled are discriminated against, as are the short, the near-sighted, and the old.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Advocates of repeal will say sexual orientation is irrelevant to military performance in a way these attributes are not. But this is not clearly true given the peculiar characteristics of military service.

We'll hear a lot, as the debate moves forward, about gay Arabic translators being discharged from military service. A decision to separate from the military someone who is sitting in an office in Northern Virginia may look silly. But the Obama Defense Department is entirely free to ensure that those men and women continue to use their skills to serve their country in those same offices as civilians. And translators who are uniformed members of the military are subject to the usual demands of training and deployment, so the questions about the effect of open homosexuals on unit morale and cohesion in training and combat situations remain relevant.

As an intellectual matter, gays in the military is a not uninteresting question. We have our views, as does President Obama, and we are not averse to debating the issue. But surely there are more pressing and important matters for our political and military leaders to be spending their time on.

—William Kristol

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What Obama Isn't Saying

The apolitical politics of progressivism.

BY HARVEY MANSFIELD

GARY LOCKE

"I am not the first president to take up this cause, but I am determined to be the last."

The words are those of President Barack Obama speaking to Congress on health care reform on September 9, 2009. They contain the secret of his appeal—and the cause of his first-year failure.

Harvey Mansfield is a professor of government at Harvard and a member of the Hoover Institution's Task Force on the Virtues of a Free Society.

His appeal from the first has been to be beyond ordinary politics. Ordinary politics is partisan politics, and to be beyond it is to be nonpartisan or, as sophisticates say, postpartisan. Obama has the cool of a nonpartisan, quite unlike the late Edward Kennedy, who was a paragon of partisan heat and sweat. But beyond politics is not just a mood, it's a place and a situation. Obama's aspiration, the goal of his politics, is to put the country in a situation that no longer requires parties, when at last partisan rhetoric has accomplished its task, advocacy is inapt, sympathy and zeal are no longer needed, and postpartisan cool is correct.

Postpartisan cool is not, however, the mere sign of an intellectual fad such as postmodern relativism. One can see Obama's aspiration in the first Democratic president, Thomas Jefferson, who founded not only the Democratic party but also the idea of party government in America. After forming the first publicly avowed party against the Federalists, he proceeded to announce in his first Inaugural Address that "we are all Republicans, we are all Federalists." "Republicans" meant Democratic-Republicans, later Democrats. Yet the best word to describe Obama is *progressive*, for nonpartisanship in politics is inherent in the idea of progress.

What every progressive wants is to put the particular issue he espouses beyond political dispute. Obama wanted, and as his first State of the Union address showed still wants, to put health care beyond politics so that he can be the last president to be concerned with it. He did concede in that speech "philosophical differences" between the parties, "that will always cause us to part ways." But he did not say what these differences are and seemed to assume that they would only infect "short-term politics" by serving the ambitions of party leaders. True leadership in Republicans would require them to cooperate in the reform despite their ambitions and their philosophy. Once the bill is enacted, health care need only be administered by experts whose main task will be to adjust (i.e., expand) its extent and to cover its costs. The principle will have been decided. It becomes an entitlement that is no longer open to political controversy; it is secure from second thoughts prompted by reactionaries.

But what is the principle? Obama acts and speaks as if there were no question of principle, but of course there is one, and it is perfectly obvious to the public: Should the government take over health care or should it be left to the private sphere? A government takeover does not require the single-payer system of Canada and

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Britain; it follows easily enough from the government's guarantee of health care to all. This general guarantee is quite different from regulation or particular requirements on private parties because it gives the government responsibility for the result and permits, even demands, that it interfere to make health care available to all. "Available to all" is a phrase that at the least creates pressure to make the *best* health care *equally* available. This is government takeover in principle if not in administration—which is not to say that a decentralized administration would make no difference.

Government takeover or not is the issue at stake, but Obama has attempted to blur it. He says that the question is not whether government is big or small but whether it "works." This is manifest evasion, as it can work either way and the question is which is better. Obama admitted that he could have done a better job with rhetoric, but at the same time he implied that he had been defeated only by rhetoric. In fact, it was not he but his Republican opponents who posed the issue of principle, for Obama was looking ahead beyond the passage of the health care bill to the time when it would no longer be disputed. He advanced the end to the beginning and middle of the process, as if there was little or nothing to be debated, only how the nonpartisan end was to be accomplished. For example, the "public option" of government health insurance was sold as an item of consumer choice as if it were quite comparable to private insurance while at the same time serving as the standard for such choice, to establish what is good enough and cheap enough for all. Instead of raising the issue of government vs. private control, this nonpartisan strategy made government control appear to be another option in the health insurance market rather than regulator of the market.

One might call this sort of governing rational administration or rational control. It is government directed by reason that does not appeal to reason but rather to subrational motives that will lead people to do what is rational without their quite understanding what they are doing. An appeal to reason would be a straightforward argument in favor of the principle of government control of health care, but this is thought to be too divisive and too demanding to succeed. So, rather than espouse the principle, Obama has evaded it, and done his best to keep attention focused on the result. The result is described in terms of present benefits made cheaper and more secure, with no attempt to explain how health care as a whole might look and feel when controlled by the government. It might, after all, be enhanced by a new sense of community—which is the benefit put forward by advocates of straightforward, single-payer government control. But to do this, Obama would have to argue against opponents of government control. They will say they cannot believe we will not suffer when health care is managed by bureaucrats, who like children want to touch everything with their sticky hands. There is too much risk in a debate of principles. You may wake up more opponents than you gain converts.

Obama has in his White House a Harvard law professor, Cass Sunstein, who recently coauthored a book that sets forth the idea and some techniques of rational administration. The book is entitled *Nudge*, and it shows how people can be nudged to make a rational choice when they cannot be openly persuaded to do so; for example, children in a school cafeteria might by careful placement of choices be gotten to select grapefruit rather than marshmallow. Similarly but on a grander scale, Obama wants to nudge the American people to approve the health care that is rational for them to choose.

But he has so far failed. The reason, fundamentally, can be found in our constitutional form of government. Rational administration is more suited to monarchy than to republics. The classical exposition of the idea of governing by reason through human passions is in the political theory of Thomas Hobbes, who favored monarchy over a republic. The classical demonstration of how rational administration operates is in Tocqueville's book on the Ancien Régime, which shows how administrators of the French monarchy—particularly Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin—made it dominant by using reason without ever arguing principle.

Obama is not our king. But he uses the monarchical branch of our republic without embarrassment to project the nonpartisan image of a monarch. He has not been a strong president; he has deferred to Congress, perhaps to his cost. But he likes the aura of monarchy and uses it skillfully to transcend partisan argument. He lets us know that he admires Abraham Lincoln, yet his speeches could not be more different from Lincoln's in respect to argument. Lincoln used argument to transcend momentary feelings. Obama avoids it by recourse to vacuous words like "change" and "hope," never saying toward what or for what.

The Constitution, however, maintains a separation of powers that allows and facilitates opposition to the majority. In this case Republicans, prompted by tea party activists, were induced to give voice to their principles and thus give substance to resistance that might otherwise have seemed a mere defense of the status quo. For, in fact, most Americans are satisfied with their health care, and they can easily conclude that they have more to lose than to gain from "reform." The Democrats found themselves in the strange position of denouncing generous health care insurance, often secured by unions who support them, as "Cadillac plans." Hypochondriacs they must be who dare to desire better health care than Big Government is prepared to provide them. Let's tax them! Here was a vivid demonstration of the progressive principle in deed even as it shied away from expression.

We shall see whether Obama is goaded into arguing the principle behind his health care plan (and his entire administration, for that matter). He understands that his principle prospers best when it is not enunciated. His politics is apolitical; it wants to put an end to politics. It considers its measures to be progressive, and progress to be irreversible. Only through this conception can one recognize, and understand, the pretentiousness of want-

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ing to be the last president to take up health care.

An analogy of partisan politics to athletics may be helpful. A Harvard fan like me always wants to defeat Yale but at the same time always wants to defeat a worthy opponent. It's a contradictory desire in principle because a worthy opponent will sometimes win. But in practice one learns to lose. Someone might object that to win an election is more important than to win a game. To which I respond: Maybe so, but it is more important to continue to have elections than to win one of them. Next to liberty of the mind, there is no more important liberty than political liberty. This means that no partisan victory is permanent and that we shall always return to different versions of the same questions. Progress can never make political liberty obsolete by solving the problems that we contend over. Those who want to put an issue like health care "beyond politics" simply want an imposed political solution to their liking.

In these pages recently, James Ceaser made the argument that Obama is inspired by the religion of humanity (see "The Roots of Obama Worship," January 25, 2010). The desire to act on behalf of humanity betrays impatience with the contentiousness of politics within nations, where life is always both inspired and bounded by partisan and national loyalties. Over time the devotees of progressive politics discover that they can do away with domestic political differences only through a globalization that does away with national differences. That is why multiculturalism—which is today's downsized term for the religion of humanity—is both a domestic and a foreign policy.

Obama's opponents sometimes dismiss his nonpartisanship as just a cynical mask for his progressive partisanship. But I agree with James Ceaser that Obama's profession to be beyond politics is essential to his politics and must be taken seriously. To take it seriously one must find an answer to it. What is it in human beings that makes some of them love progress more than liberty and makes others love liberty more than progress? ♦

The Ideologue

Barack Obama's no Bill Clinton.

BY FRED BARNES

President Obama's greatest need is to escape the ideological grip of congressional Democrats and the liberal base of the Democratic party (they're one and the same). But he either doesn't recognize this or, as a conventional liberal himself, isn't so inclined. This self-inflicted difficulty has put Obama in worse political straits than President Clinton faced after the Republican landslide of 1994.

Certainly there was nothing in Obama's State of the Union address last week to indicate he understands the fix he's in or has devised a credible way to get out of it. His message, though he didn't put it in quite these words, was that he'd rather fight for unpopular liberal policies than switch to broadly appealing centrist ones.

A bad omen for Obama and Democrats was the pleased-as-punch response of Capitol Hill's top Republican, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. "It makes my job a little easier than if he were moving to the middle and picking up people," McConnell says. "I naïvely thought he was going to do a course correction."

McConnell characterizes the Obama strategy as: "Ignore the public, we know what's best, full speed ahead." The practical effect is to yield the political high ground to Republicans. "He can call us the party of no till he's blue in the face," McConnell says. "It depends on what you're saying no to."

When the president had lunch with television anchors at the White House the day of the speech, he minimized his political distress. Were the rate of unemployment two points lower, he'd be in fine shape, Obama suggested. That's probably true. And if pigs had wings they could fly.

Since the Republican Senate victory in Massachusetts on January 19 and the collapse of Obama's domestic agenda, the parallels between Obama now and Clinton in 1994 have come into sharp focus. The president, by the way, told the anchors Republican Scott Brown won because he was the better candidate, not because he made opposition to Obama's policies the centerpiece of his campaign.

To save his presidency after his stiff rebuff in the midterm elections, Clinton lurched to the political center. He adopted a strategy of "triangulation" that involved painful compromises with Republicans, who had captured the House and Senate. It worked. Clinton glided to reelection in 1996, defeating Republican Bob Dole by 7 points.

Though it's rarely acknowledged, Clinton's most significant successes in the White House were all in con-

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junction with Republicans: the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993, welfare reform in 1996, and balanced budget legislation in 1997 that included a cut in the capital gains tax rate from 28 percent to 20 percent that spurred the financial boom and budget surplus of his second term.

For Clinton, creating daylight between his presidency and liberal Democrats was easy. They hadn't been responsible for his election in 1992, nor was he ideologically tethered to them. In Obama's case, separating himself would be hard. The liberal base was instrumental in his election, controls both houses of Congress, and may retain its majority after the 2010 midterms as well. As a politician, Obama is a creature of modern liberalism.

Even if Obama wanted to, it would be awkward for him to negotiate legislative deals with Republicans while liberal Democrats control Congress. And it would be regarded as a betrayal if he vetoed a Democratic bill. I can't recall a recent example of a president vetoing a measure passed by his own party. Obama's veto threats in the State of the Union weren't taken seriously by Democrats or Republicans.

At the core of Obama's trouble is a misreading of the 2008 election. He and Democratic liberals interpreted it as a mandate for an era of liberal lawmaking and governance in a newly minted center-left America. And they set out to create that era with sweeping initiatives on health care, energy and the environment, and the economy.

They were wrong, as everyone but the most unswerving or fogbound liberal now understands. America is a center-right country politically and has been for decades. Pushing a liberal agenda for a year has cost Obama dearly. His public approval has fallen at a record rate (for a first-year president), and so has support for his policies.

He is clinging to the one advantage his party retains, its strength in Congress. "To Democrats, I would remind you that we still have the largest majority in decades and the people expect us to solve some problems, not run for the hills," Obama declared in the speech. Sorry, Mr. President, but dozens of Democrats in Republican-leaning districts or red states are already in full flight, either deciding to retire or abandoning your agenda.

Obama is giving aid and comfort to the Republican counterstrategy. As in 1994, Republicans say they're ready to cooperate with the president when they can, oppose him when they can't. So McConnell, for one, is willing to go along with Obama's puny budget freeze. But Obama has offered Republicans much else that might be risky to oppose.

To salvage Obamacare, Democrats buttonholed several Republican senators last week with schemes for tweaking the bill. The senators declined to negotiate, telling the Democrats, "Call McConnell." Under McConnell's leadership, Senate Republicans are united in preferring to start over, from scratch, on health care reform. So far, McConnell hasn't gotten a call from the White House or any Democrat.

To boost his recovery after the Republican landslide of 1994, Clinton found a useful foil, the new House speaker, Newt Gingrich. When Gingrich overreached, Clinton was the beneficiary. Obama desperately needs a foil, but his attempts to turn McConnell and Republicans into one have failed. Instead, he's become their foil.

Let's give Obama credit for intellectual honesty. He believes in his agenda. Speaking at a House Republican retreat in Baltimore last week, Obama insisted, "I am not an ideologue." But he sure can pass for one. And despite his travails, Obama brims with self-confidence. He told Democrat Marion Berry of Arkansas, a seven-term House member, that Democrats today have a unique advantage they lacked in 1994—"me." Berry doesn't agree. He's retiring. ♦

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An Agenda in Shambles

The 'New Foundation' collapses.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

In April 2009, President Obama laid out his domestic agenda in a speech at Georgetown University. This was no ordinary chat; Obama envisioned nothing less than a reorientation of the American system. He sought to shift the economy from the rough and tumble cowboy capitalism of the past to a less risky, pricier, and perhaps slightly more comfortable European future. "We must lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity," Obama said.

Less than a year later, this agenda is in shambles. The president's "new foundation" is just another part of America's crumbling infrastructure. Its pillars are strewn across the congressional landscape. Democrats are afraid to touch them—and for good reason. They are radioactive.

To read Obama's Georgetown speech today is to see a president at the height of his power. The ambition was huge. The language was bold. The theme was clear: The financial crisis had repudiated unregulated markets and a small social safety net; hence the need to reform the financial sector and provide for the uninsured and unemployed. In the president's view, the crises he inherited proved that the Reaganite model of governance—low taxes, a budget favoring defense over social spending, limited regulation—had outlived its usefulness. It was time to replace it.

Obama had five goals: reform the banks, spend more on education, create a "green economy" through cap and trade and government subsidy, pass universal health insurance, and shift the focus of discretionary spending from defense to social programs. Strip away the spending initiatives, and you see that none of Obama's goals has been achieved.

The bank bill awaits action in the Senate. Cap and trade and health care died in the Massachusetts snow. That leaves education, which is a bipartisan issue and an area of domestic policy where Obama is probably doing more good than harm. It's small fry, moreover, to a president who billed himself as FDR's heir.

What brought Obama down to earth? Economic stagnation and public opposition. Democrats blame the president's troubles solely on unemployment—get more people working, they say, and his agenda would pass. What the Democrats miss is the president's own role in creating a hostile economic environment. They should try rereading his Georgetown speech.

"We've had no choice," the president told his audience, "but to attack all fronts of our economic crisis at once." Next came a reference to the $787 billion stimulus bill, the signature economic policy of the Obama administration and the most important mistake of his young presidency.

The stimulus has done nothing to promote private sector employment, and it seriously damaged the president's credibility. In selling the plan, the White House said the stimulus would hold unemployment to 8 percent. Unemployment is holding at 10 percent. The administration can argue, with some justification, that things might have been worse without the stimulus. But voters are seldom swayed by this sort of "you-don't-know-how-good-you-got-it" argument.

The stimulus had two other important effects. It united a dispirited Republican party, and it lulled the White House into a false sense of security. *Well, the economy's taken care of*, they must have thought. *Now we can start turning America into a really, really big version of Liechtenstein*.

It is remarkable just how out of step the White House became. Health care reform, the bailouts, and cap and trade are not only unpopular. The public sees them as unimportant. Last week the Pew Research Center released a list of the public's priorities. Number one is the economy. Health care is eighth. Financial regulation is fifteenth. Global warming? Dead last at twenty-one.

Which brings us to Obama's other big mistake. Throughout 2009 the White House cavalierly dismissed its critics. It picked high-profile fights with Rush Limbaugh and Fox News. It dismissed all objections to health care reform as lies. It said the public's "anger" and "frustration" was completely disassociated from the substance of the Obama agenda. It ascribed Republican victories in Virginia and New Jersey solely to weak candidates and local issues.

Progressive confidence devolved into progressive hubris—a hubris that blinded Obama to changing political reality. Before he knew it, Massachusetts voted to replace Edward Kennedy with a Republican truck driver from Wrentham whose mother had been on welfare and who campaigned explicitly on opposition to the president's health care bill.

Obama's response? In his State of the Union address last week, the president blamed these setbacks on Senate rules, Republican obstruction, and a failure to communicate effectively. In other words, the message was not received.

It takes time for an administration to change course; maybe Obama will drop his big government agenda and move to the center over the coming year. He doesn't, however, seem to want to. So Republicans have every reason to be cheerful. Obama persists in laying the foundation for a house nobody wants to buy. ♦

Matthew Continetti is associate editor of The Weekly Standard *and the author, most recently, of* The Persecution of Sarah Palin *(Sentinel Books).*

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Lack of Intelligence

Why didn't the Obama administration interrogate the Christmas bomber? BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

On January 27, the secretary of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, was roundly criticized at a meeting of the House Homeland Security Committee. She had ducked the hearing, which was about the Christmas Day terrorist attack, and lawmakers were animated. The surprise was that it was Democrats doing most of the attacking.

"She was invited to testify at this very important hearing, and she should have been here," said Jane Harman, Democrat from California. "I am very personally disappointed that she isn't here."

Chris Carney, from Pennsylvania, was more direct. "I am very dismayed that the secretary herself isn't here," he said. "I mean it's probably fair to ask: 'Where the hell is Secretary Napolitano?'"

Napolitano, who had been scheduled to be overseas, was in town and that evening was seen on national television at the State of the Union address. But she chose not to attend the congressional hearing.

Who can blame her? Immediately after the attack, the White House dispatched her to make its case on the Sunday talk shows, where Napolitano claimed that "the system worked." At a press briefing on the attack, Napolitano said that she was surprised Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was showing so much "determination" to strike in the United States and acknowledged that she did not expect the group to send individuals—as opposed to groups—to conduct attacks. And earlier last month, at a Senate hearing on the same subject, she was roundly castigated for those comments and for the fact that she was not a part of the decisionmaking process that resulted in the terrorist, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, being mirandized fewer than 12 hours after he was detained.

Napolitano is a convenient scapegoat. After all, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs also claimed on national television that the system worked. The head of the National Counterterrorism Center, Michael Leiter, left for vacation the day after the attack. Top White House counterterrorism adviser John Brennan told him to go. Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair did not know that the elite interrogation unit proposed by the White House—the high-value detainee interrogation group (HIG)—does not yet exist. And the president, three days after interrogators supposedly elicited valuable intelligence about Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula from Abdulmutallab, claimed that the attack was the work of "an isolated extremist."

That last claim was the subject of an exchange between Representative Peter King, Republican of New York, and the NCTC's Michael Leiter at the January 27 hearing.

Asked how the president could have made such a claim, Leiter made it clear that the intelligence community had told the White House about Abdulmutallab's involvement with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula—something the bomber acknowledged in his initial interview with the FBI.

> I will say that on the night, on Christmas night we advised the White House, and I think the White House immediately said, that we believe this was an attempted terrorist attack. I will also add that during this entire look back—an ongoing investigation, as you know—different pieces of information have come forward which have made it more and more clear, I think, each day of his connections to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

King pressed Leiter: "Who would have allowed him to say 'isolated extremist' when he was not isolated?"

"Congressman, I know that the National Counterterrorism Center and others were providing intelligence to the White House on an ongoing basis," replied Leiter. "I simply don't know how those statements were produced."

The White House hasn't been any more forthcoming. Asked for details on the handling of Abdulmutallab, Gibbs has provided little information. At a White House briefing, he was asked about a media report that Abdulmutallab had been interrogated for fewer than 50 minutes before FBI agents read him his rights. Gibbs claimed that he did not know how long the interrogation lasted. But in an earlier appearance on *Fox News Sunday*, Gibbs had not disputed a claim from Chris Wallace that the interrogation lasted just 50 minutes. Gibbs further claimed that FBI interrogators "were able to get all that they could out of him."

That, of course, is nonsense. Several sources confirm that Abdulmutallab's interview lasted 50 minutes. And while Abdulmutallab did share some information about his time in Yemen, sources say that intelligence professionals, particularly those who have been tracking Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, are furious that they did not have any opportunity to learn more from a person who might have fresh knowledge about the group and its leaders. One source told me that there is virtually no one in the intelligence community who will defend the decision to mirandize Abdulmutallab after talking to him for less than an hour.

The failure to obtain more from Abdulmutallab is all the more significant because intelligence officials are conducting fewer interrogations today than at any time since the

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9/11 attacks. There are three reasons: (1) The administration has dramatically changed U.S. interrogation policy, sources say, and there is widespread confusion about what is permissible; (2) the HIG, which is supposed to conduct interrogations, does not yet exist; and (3) there are fewer terrorists to interrogate because the administration prefers to kill them with drone strikes rather than capture them on the ground.

The administration never misses a chance to make the last point—indeed, President Obama mentioned it in his State of the Union address. But you cannot interrogate a dead terrorist, which makes it all the more imperative that you get everything you can from any terrorists you do capture.

"The determination to place Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab into the U.S. civilian court system was made without the input or knowledge of the director of National Intelligence, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, or the secretary of Homeland Security," said Senator Susan Collins, ranking Republican on the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

> This mistake likely foreclosed the collection of additional intelligence information and may have prevented the collection of valuable intelligence about future terrorist threats to the United States. We know that interrogations of terrorists can provide critical intelligence, but our civil justice system, as opposed to military detention, encourages terrorists to "lawyer-up" and stop answering questions.
>
> That was the case here. Abdulmutallab had provided some information to law enforcement officials immediately after his capture, and we surely would have obtained more if we had treated this foreign terrorist as an enemy belligerent and placed him in the military tribunal system instead.

Abdulmutallab sits in jail today with intelligence that we could be using to prevent future attacks. Top administration and intelligence officials—including Blair, FBI director Robert Mueller, and CIA director Leon Panetta—will have an opportunity to explain that fact at a hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee this week.

If they show up. ♦

The Small Bill

A one-page alternative to Obamacare.

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

In the week between Scott Brown's seismic win and the State of the Union address, the Obama administration tried mightily to explain away the verdict of the Bay State voters. Despite the fact that Brown had plainly made the election a referendum on Obamacare, the voters, according to the administration's narrative, had not rejected it. Rather, they had rejected Martha Coakley. They had been voting on other issues. They hadn't understood the bills in question. They were frustrated that change wasn't coming quickly enough. Indeed, they were simply expressing the same frustration that had swept Barack Obama into office. (In other words, they had apparently decided to stick it to George W. Bush by filling Ted Kennedy's Senate seat with a Republican.)

In the State of the Union, Obama offered another response. The Massachusetts voters *had* rejected Obamacare, but that didn't mean that he had to abide by their wishes. "I never suggested that change would be easy." "Democracy," he said, "can be noisy and messy." "We can do what's necessary to keep our poll numbers high and get through the next election." Or we can do "what's best for the next generation."

House Democrats seemed a bit stunned by this language, responding with silence rather than applause. They will face the voters in just nine months, and many of them represent Republican-leaning districts. Now, in the wake of Scott Brown's triumph, President Obama wants them to "take another look" at his proposals.

The American people have already taken a long look at Obamacare, and they don't want it. They don't want a government takeover that limits choice and competition, funnels $1 trillion from American taxpayers to insurance companies in its first dozen years (2014 to 2025), cuts Medicare Advantage benefits by an average of $21,000 per enrollee (except in South Florida) in its real first decade, and contains enough shady backroom deals to make Jimmy Hoffa blush.

Most of all, the American people don't want a $2.5 trillion bill that does all of *that* and still fails to do the one essential thing: lower health care costs.

During his State of the Union address, Obama also said that "if anyone from either party has a better approach . . . let me know." Well, without seeming too presumptuous, Mr. President, here you go!

The small bill depicted on the adjacent page offers seven real reforms (the last a combination of smaller reforms) that together would lower costs, significantly increase the number of insured, and be deficit-neutral.

Its proposals are not revolutionary or even particularly novel. They reflect ideas that are widely shared by Republicans in the House and Senate, as well as by many of their Democratic colleagues. The bill incorporates proposals that Tevi Troy and I have previously advanced. And it reflects scoring by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) of the House Republican bill—the one bill proposed so far that the CBO has said would actually lower health costs. But the small bill would meet the American people's goals for health care reform—while Obamacare wouldn't—and it would do so at only a fraction of the price.

The small bill would cut health costs by roughly as much as the

Jeffrey H. Anderson, the director of the Benjamin Rush Society, was the senior speechwriter for Department of Health and Human Services secretary Mike Leavitt.

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Small-Bill Proposal for Sensible Health Care Reform

To make health insurance more accessible, affordable, and portable—without increasing government control, jeopardizing the quality of care, or breaking the bank:

1. ***Cut costs by preventing runaway malpractice lawsuits.*** Relieve doctors from having to practice costly defensive medicine, by capping noneconomic and punitive damages, while continuing to allow unlimited economic damages to compensate for financial loss. (No increase in government spending. Savings: $53 billion to the federal government, and billions in additional savings to private citizens.*)

2. ***Cut costs by allowing Americans to buy insurance across state lines.*** Allow Americans to shop for coverage from coast to coast—whether from lower-mandate states at lower prices, or from higher-mandate (additional-coverage) states at higher prices. Allow plans bought in one state to be transported to another. (No increase in government spending.*)

3. ***Cut costs by allowing lower premiums for healthier lifestyles.*** Federal regulations ban companies from offering more than a 20 percent discount to those who eat and drink in moderation, exercise, or don't smoke. Such regulations handcuff private cost-cutting efforts and should be eliminated. (No increase in government spending.*)

4. ***Increase access to health insurance by ending the unfair tax on the uninsured (and self-insured), giving them a tax-break similar to that which is already available to those with employer-provided insurance.*** Provide refundable annual tax-credits of $2,500 per person or $5,000 per family—directly to the American people, not to insurers. Leave employer-provided insurance, its tax-exempt status, and the rest of the tax code, intact. (Increase in government spending: approximately $80 billion (for credits beyond taxes paid). Reduced revenues: approximately $120 billion (for refunds of taxes paid).*)

5. ***Provide further help for those who are uninsured and have expensive preexisting conditions, by increasing federal support for state-run or state-organized high-risk pools.*** Thirty-four states already have pools to help those who can't get affordable coverage because of expensive preexisting conditions. We should help all 50 states to establish or organize such pools. (Increase in government spending: $100 billion.*) (See ** below.)

6. ***Convert some federal funds into block grants to states, and reallocate the savings resulting from reducing the number of uninsured.*** Disproportionate Share Hospital (or DSH ("dish")) payments reimburse hospitals for treating the uninsured in emergency rooms. With fewer uninsured, some of these funds can be allocated more efficiently, helping to fund the above proposals. Start the block grants at 75 percent of each state's current federal DSH funding level, reduce them by 5 percent annually until they reach 50 percent in year-6, and then index them to the consumer price index minus one percentage point. (No increase in government spending. Savings: approximately $180 billion.*)

7. ***Implement additional reforms from the House Republican health bill.*** Adopt regulatory reforms in the small group and non-group markets, standards for electronic administration, an abbreviated approval pathway for follow-on biological products, and HSA reforms). (Increase in government spending: $0. Savings: $20 billion.*)

Estimated 10-year totals: $180 billion in costs, 10 million newly insured, no deficit spending.*

*Tallies are estimates for 2011 to 2020, based largely on previously published Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projections. Additionally, an estimated $50 billion would be saved through associated effects on revenues and outlays, based on CBO scoring of the House GOP bill.

**A federal survey cited by the CBO indicates that 1-1.5 million Americans are uninsured because of preexisting conditions. Safely assuming twice that many (2-3 million), each person would get $3,333-5,000, plus a tax credit of $2,000, for a total of $5,333-$7,000 in yearly federal relief.

www.smallbill.org

Scorecard for the Bill's Real First 10 Years

	Senate Bill*	Small Bill
Spending Increases	$2.5 trillion	$180 billion
Tax Increases	$1.0 trillion	$0
Medicare Cuts**	$800 billion	$0
Medicare Advantage Cuts	$214 billion	$0
Deficit Spending	$217 billion***	$0
Number of Newly Insured per $20 Billion Spent	260,000	1.1 million

*According to CBO projections for the Senate bill from 2014 to 2023
**Excluding DSH; ***Unless doctors' pay under Medicare is cut by 21%

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 200,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? About 1.2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for over sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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House Republican health bill, which contains very similar cost-cutting provisions. The CBO estimates that by 2016, the House GOP bill would cut insurance premiums by 7 to 10 percent in the small-group market, 5 to 8 percent in the individual market, and up to 3 percent in the large-group market, in relation to current law. Under Obamacare, the CBO says that the average family's premiums in the individual market would rise by $2,100 a year in relation to current law. The small bill would achieve these favorable results despite costing only about $180 billion in its real first decade—just 7 percent as much as Obamacare. And, unlike Obamacare, which would not go into effect in any meaningful way until 2014, the small bill would start next year.

Under the small bill, approximately 10 million additional people would acquire insurance, at a cost of about $18,000 per newly insured person versus about $76,000 under Obamacare. In other words, for every $20 billion spent, Obamacare would result in approximately 260,000 additional people becoming insured, compared with 1.1 million people under the small bill.

When the federal government isn't limiting their ability to do so, Americans know how to shop for value, and they will have no problem identifying the small bill as a far better value than Obamacare. In truth, even the status quo is clearly a better value than Obamacare. But the choice needn't be between those two unpleasant alternatives. Real reform is within our reach.

A recent McLaughlin and Associates poll asked Americans whether they would prefer Obamacare or a bill that took "more modest steps like allowing the purchase of insurance across state lines to improve competition, creating a risk pool to help people with preexisting conditions afford coverage, and curbing lawsuits against doctors." By almost three to one—61 percent to 21 percent—respondents favored the more modest alternative to Obamacare. Among those who felt "strongly," the tally was 31 percent to 9 percent.

Let's start over and give the American people what they want. ♦

More Mr. Nice Guy

While nukes proliferate, Obama fiddles.

BY JOHN BOLTON

In his lengthy State of the Union address, President Obama was brief on national security issues, which he squeezed in toward the end. International terrorism, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and even America's relief efforts in Haiti all flashed past in bullet-point mentions. On Iraq and Afghanistan, Obama emphasized neither victory nor determination, but merely the early withdrawal of U.S. forces from both. His once vaunted Middle East peace process didn't make the cut.

Nonetheless, during this windshield tour of the world, the president found time to opine more explicitly than ever before that reducing America's nuclear weapons and delivery systems will temper the global threat of proliferation. Obama boasted that "the United States and Russia are completing negotiations on the farthest-reaching arms control treaty in nearly two decades" and that he is trying to secure "all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world in four years, so that they never fall into the hands of terrorists."

Then came Obama's critical linkage: "These diplomatic efforts have also strengthened our hand in dealing with those nations that insist on violating international agreements in pursuit of nuclear weapons." Obama described the increasing "isolation" of both North Korea and Iran, the two most conspicuous—but far from the only—nuclear proliferators. He also mentioned the increased sanctions imposed on Pyongyang after its second nuclear test in 2009 and the "growing consequences" he says Iran will face because of his policies.

In fact, reducing our nuclear arsenal will not somehow persuade Iran and North Korea to alter their behavior or encourage others to apply more pressure on them to do so. Obama's remarks reflect a complete misreading of strategic realities.

We have no need for further arms control treaties with Russia, especially ones that reduce our nuclear and delivery capabilities to Moscow's economically forced low levels. We have international obligations, moreover, that Russia does not, requiring our nuclear umbrella to afford protection to friends and allies worldwide. Obama's policy artificially inflates Russian influence and, depending on the final agreement, will likely reduce our nuclear and strategic delivery capabilities dangerously and unnecessarily. (Securing "loose" nuclear materials internationally has long been a bipartisan goal, properly so. Obama said nothing new on that score.) Meanwhile, Obama is considering treaty restrictions on our missile defense capabilities more damaging than his own previous unilateral reductions.

What warrants close attention is the jarring naïveté of arguing that reducing our capabilities will inhibit nuclear proliferators. That would certainly surprise Tehran and Pyongyang. Obama's insistence that the evildoers are "violating international agreements" is also startling, as if this were of equal importance with the proliferation itself.

The premise underlying these assertions may well be found in Obama's smug earlier comment that we should "put aside the schoolyard taunts about who is tough. . . . Let's

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leave behind the fear and division." By reducing to the level of wayward boys the debates over whether his policies are making us more or less secure, Obama reveals a deep disdain for the decades of strategic thinking that kept America safe during the Cold War and afterwards. Even more pertinent, Obama's indifference and scorn for real threats are chilling auguries of what the next three years may hold.

Obama has now explicitly rejected the idea that U.S. weakness is provocative, arguing instead that weakness will convince Tehran and Pyongyang to do the opposite of what they have been resolutely doing for decades—vigorously pursuing their nuclear and missile programs. Obama's first year amply demonstrates that his approach will do nothing even to retard, let alone stop, Iran and North Korea.

Neither Bush nor Obama administration efforts toward international sanctions have had any measurable impact. The first Security Council sanctions on North Korea after its ballistic missile and nuclear weapons tests in 2006 did not stop Pyongyang from conducting further missile launches and a second nuclear detonation in 2009. Nor have the measures imposed after that second test, about which Obama boasted, impaired the North's nuclear program or even brought Pyongyang back to the risible Six-Party Talks. Three sets of Security Council restrictions against Iran have only glancingly affected Tehran's nuclear program, and the Obama administration's threats of "crippling sanctions" have disappeared along with last year's series of "deadlines" that Iran purportedly faced. In response, Tehran's authoritarianism and belligerence have only increased.

With his counterproliferation strategies, such as they were, in disarray, Obama now pins his hopes on moral suasion, which has never influenced Iran, North Korea, or any other determined proliferator. Perhaps it would have been better had the president's speech not mentioned national security at all. ♦

Leno Takes It on the Chin

But he's more sinned-against than sinning.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

America's safest comedian, Jay Leno, is now Public Enemy No. 1. Just after New Year's Day, NBC became entangled in a Mexican standoff with Leno, the former host of the *Tonight Show*, and Conan O'Brien, the then-host of the *Tonight Show*. And lots of people took sides against Leno. Protestors assembled outside the NBC studios at 30 Rockefeller Center chanting slogans such as "Leno kills puppies!" Aaron Barnhart, the TV critic for the *Kansas City Star*, wrote that Leno was "a two-faced, hypocritical, unfunny lying jerk." The *New York Observer* likened him to Gollum. In the *Wall Street Journal*, Joe Queenan compared Leno to Hitler. David Letterman took shots at Leno on CBS. So did Jimmy Kimmel on ABC. Even Leno's NBC colleagues on *Saturday Night Live* went after him.

Leno's crime was agreeing to return as host of the *Tonight Show*. It's odd that a case of corporate succession planning would animate such a spectacle. But in any event, the protestors, TV writers, and comics have it all wrong: The person to blame for Conan O'Brien leaving the *Tonight Show* is Conan O'Brien.

This slow-motion train wreck began in April 2004 when NBC renewed Leno's contract. After Johnny Carson left the show in 1992, there had been a fight to replace him. NBC chose Leno, and the defeated David Letterman left for CBS, where he set up a competing franchise. Letterman beat Leno in the ratings at first, but by 1995, Leno had retooled *Tonight* and turned it into a juggernaut. By the time he re-upped his contract in 2004, he had beaten Letterman for nine consecutive years.

Five months later, it was time for O'Brien's contract to be renegotiated. O'Brien was host of *Late Night*, the show that followed *Tonight* and, like Leno's, owned its time-slot. But O'Brien was no longer content to host *Late Night*—he wanted Leno's job. According to a *Variety* report at the time, O'Brien "made it clear to NBC execs that there were opportunities elsewhere" and that he would leave the network if they did not give him Leno's show.

NBC didn't want to lose O'Brien, but also didn't want Leno to take his successful show elsewhere. So programming chief Jeff Zucker tried to strike a compromise: He signed a deal with O'Brien guaranteeing that he would take over as host of the *Tonight Show* in 2009. As part of the deal, O'Brien was guaranteed to remain as host of *Tonight* for at least two years or he would be entitled to a payout of $60 million.

The news was a surprise. Leno was only 54, and his show still dominated the ratings, pulling in 5.5 million viewers a night. He didn't want to leave *Tonight*, but he didn't have very many options. He asked to be released from his contract, but NBC refused. The network wanted him out of the time slot, but didn't want him to go elsewhere and set up a competing show. The executives in charge figured that they had time to come up with a way to square the circle.

And Leno kept delivering for NBC. He was a good corporate soldier and brought O'Brien onto his show. Leno smiled and said all the right things. By 2006, his ratings were up slightly, to 5.7 million viewers, widening his lead over Letterman (who had just 4.2 million viewers) and crushing Jimmy Kim-

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mel (whose show brought in only 1.6 million viewers). To get a sense of how important Leno was to NBC, consider this: 2006 was a down year in late-night advertising sales, yet Leno's *Tonight* took in $250 million that year, clearing a net of $160 million, 15 percent of the network's total profits.

Zucker still hadn't figured out what to do with Leno and still refused to let him out of his contract, claiming that he wanted to keep him at NBC "for life." But a strange idea was being floated: Perhaps the network could simply move Leno's show to primetime.

It wasn't the first time the network had toyed with the notion of a prime time talk show. In 1981, they had discussed the idea with Carson. Three years ago they had approached Oprah Winfrey about doing one, too. In December 2008, NBC announced that the *Jay Leno Show* would air 5 nights a week, 46 weeks a year, at 10 P.M. It would be substantially the same show as *Tonight*, only 90 minutes earlier. Leno's new contract was, in relative terms, modest. He didn't want full ownership of the show, for instance. But it did stipulate that, if the *Jay Leno Show* was taken off the air before two years had passed, Leno would be owed $80 million. To anyone paying attention, this was a declaration that while the network was willing to experiment and give in to O'Brien's demands, if push came to shove, they would return to Leno (and save $20 million by buying out O'Brien).

Leno left *Tonight* in May 2009; O'Brien took over the next month. His ratings were strong initially. He held onto the lead over Letterman for several weeks. But then his numbers began to drop. By August, Letterman was beating him handily, with 3.41 million viewers to O'Brien's 2.47 million. (Before he stepped down, Leno's 2009 average had been 4.4 million viewers.) During the summer, it got so bad that O'Brien was even losing to Letterman repeats.

The next month, Leno's primetime show launched. It was a debacle. Leno's ratings in primetime started out low and trended downward. Having such a poorly performing show at 10 P.M. crippled the 11 P.M. newscasts of NBC's local affiliates. And O'Brien's ratings at 11:30 remained stagnant.

In November, Letterman beat O'Brien with 3.88 million viewers to 2.33 million viewers. By contrast, in November 2008, Leno had won the slot for NBC with 4.76 million viewers to Letterman's 3.95 million. As Jeff Gaspin, NBC's head of television programming, glumly put it, "If you look at the ratings in households, NBC is down 14 percent, while Conan is down 49 percent. In adults 18-49, NBC was down 16 percent but *Tonight* was down 23 percent." O'Brien's tenure was an unmitigated disaster for what had been an intensely profitable arm of the network.

Jay Leno

NEWSCOM

Leno's 10 P.M. ratings were so bad, moreover, that a third of the local affiliates were threatening to preempt his show. NBC had to make a change. They could fire Leno, pay him $80 million, and hope that O'Brien managed to find an audience. (Which, you'll remember, he failed to do even before Leno's primetime bomb was on the air.) Or they could fire O'Brien, pay him $60 million, and hand the *Tonight Show* back to the guy who dominated the time slot for 14 years. Quite sensibly, NBC chose Leno.

The network's opening move was to cancel Leno's primetime show. During the first week of January, they announced that the *Jay Leno Show* would be pared down and moved back to 11:35, meaning that O'Brien's *Tonight Show* would be bumped to 12:05. This gambit wasn't intended as a compromise—it was an attempt to prod O'Brien into quitting, so he wouldn't be owed his $60 million.

But O'Brien wasn't going to let NBC off cheap: His contract specified that he was entitled to the payout if he was no longer hosting a program called the *Tonight Show* and he was willing to litigate the disagreement. A few days later, NBC and O'Brien reached a settlement: He would leave *Tonight* with $32 million for himself and $12 million in payments to his cast and crew. More important, O'Brien would be free to work on a competing show in September 2010. The one stipulation NBC foisted on O'Brien was a "no disparagement" clause, which prevents him from publicly speaking ill of the network (and Leno) until September 2010. But then NBC generously chose not to invoke the clause until *after* O'Brien had left *Tonight*, meaning that for two weeks, he used their airwaves for self-pitying jokes such as, "I just want to say to the kids out there watching: You can do anything you want in life. Unless Jay Leno wants to do it, too."

All in all, it was a much better deal than NBC had been willing to grant Leno when they took the *Tonight Show* away from him in the first place.

In any rational reading of the events, Leno is not the villain. At worst, he is guilty of working to hold on to a job he did very well. It was O'Brien who demanded he be given someone else's job. It was O'Brien who failed to perform once he was sitting in the big chair. It was O'Brien who whined publicly when NBC changed its mind. And it's O'Brien who walks away from failure with an enormous pot of gold.

In the end, Conan O'Brien's partisans don't seem to care much about any of that. They're more concerned about making sure the world knows how sophisticated they are and that NBC went the Middle America route. Yet if everyone who claimed to adore Conan O'Brien during the last few weeks had actually watched his program, he'd still be hosting the *Tonight Show*. ♦

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Farmer Knows Best

The dark side of going green.

BY BLAKE HURST

Tarkio, Missouri

Kathleen Merrigan, deputy secretary of agriculture and an organic and sustainable food expert, has announced an initiative entitled "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food." Sixty-five million dollars will be spent "to begin a national conversation to help develop local and regional food systems."

America, it seems, has been operating at a knowledge deficit when it comes to farmers, and farmers lack the social skills to close the gap between eaters and producers of food. Still, one can only imagine what a Know Your Farmer program designed by government will involve. As I survey the farmers living around me, it's clear we need some sort of sensitivity training, memberships at the local gym, nose hair trimmers, and a new barber. Most of us have been farming for decades (the average American farmer is 58) and are working land that has been owned by family members for generations. Yet any quick perusal of the current literature about agriculture would indicate that our days of farming are numbered. In the current jargon: We are not sustainable.

Local food is seen as a good thing because it travels a short distance from farm to consumer. This cuts the production of greenhouse gases, is presumed to guarantee freshness, and connects consumers with "their" farmer. "Food miles," the number of miles food travels to your table, has become an important metric, and marketers are trumpeting their allegiance to local producers.

This is mostly harmless, and farmers will benefit if they can capture some slightly larger percentage of the food dollar by selling at the farm gate or through a local USDA-subsidized farmer's market. I love showing people my farm, will talk with anybody about agriculture, and am more than willing to "know" my consumer. Even so, I imagine the experience will be a letdown for her. I'm sure to disagree with most of the views a typical Whole Foods/farmers' market customer holds about what they eat. The opportunities for confrontation are legion, and maybe some of that $65 million should be set aside for arbitration as foodies find out what "their" farmers actually believe about food production.

Local food isn't always fresher. Here in Missouri, milk reaches the store faster from the large dairies in the Southwestern states than it does from small local dairies.

In an important article in *PERC Reports*, published by the Property and Environment Research Center, Pierre Desrochers and Hiroko Shimizu demonstrate that the concept of "food miles" ignores the advantages that fertile land and agreeable climate give some producers. If my corn yield is 200 bushels an acre, while farmers in Tennessee achieve half that yield from comparable inputs, then I can afford to ship my crop a greater distance.

The PERC authors use the example of strawberries grown in California, where the climate is near perfect for the crop, and strawberries grown in Canada in greenhouses that must be heated in winter. In December, strawberries from California can be shipped to market in Canada with less total energy use than the locally grown crop. The food miles are greater, but the carbon footprint is smaller. True believers in the local food movement, of course, simply stop eating strawberries in winter. Their devotion is admirable, but a winter diet of freshly dug turnips and stored potatoes is hardly interesting. If we concentrate production of each crop in the areas best suited for it, we'll leave more acres for trees, recreation, and other environmental goods. There are perfectly defensible reasons both for shopping locally and for dispersing production, but protecting the environment isn't one of them.

Local food isn't always fresher, either. The cooperatives that collect, process, and distribute milk schedule pickups according to the size of the dairy. Driving a truck from the plant to the farm is expensive, so large dairies' milk is picked up daily, while smaller dairies may only see the milk truck a couple of times a week. Here in Missouri, milk reaches the store more quickly from the large dairies in the Southwestern states than it does from small local dairies. If Missouri consumers want to support local dairies, and I hope they do, their milk won't always be as fresh as milk that has traveled farther. As Desrochers and Shimizu point out, most food miles are clocked on the trip home from the supermarket. That truck delivering milk holds thousands of gallons. Most consumers buy one gallon at a time. The five-mile trip home from the supermarket is the most carbon-intensive trip your morning's milk will make.

Our family is enjoying the last of a side of beef we bought from a local farmer. He raised the cow on his small farm, took it to a small meat processing plant, and delivered the meat to our door. We had a nice visit, farmer to farmer, family to family. The beef is tender, cut the way we like it, and we were pleased to support a local grower.

Blake Hurst is a farmer in Missouri.

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The food miles traveled by our beef were minimal. In fact, the carbon footprint of that heifer was about as small as could be, since she was fattened on corn. That's right, corn-fed cows emit about half the greenhouse gases cattle fattened on grass emit, because corn is a more concentrated feed than grass, the cattle reach market weight faster, and less land is used per pound of food produced. If carbon footprint is your guide, better to buy beef fattened in one of those feedlots in Western Kansas and shipped cross country to your grocery store than to purchase locally raised grass-fed beef. Then again, it's probably a given that people truly concerned about energy use and environmental costs have already excised beef from their diet. I appreciate their dedication, envy their self-control, and wish them a long life. A life without beef will seem very long, indeed.

Sixty-five million dollars isn't much these days, a mere drop in the ocean of stimulus bills and health care reform. It's not even much compared with the subsidies we traditional farmers receive, and it would be hypocritical to begrudge the local and sustainable movement its chance at rent seeking from Washington, a game that farmers have played successfully for years. If the only reason for the program were to encourage small farmers as a bit of social engineering, then few would object. The damage done here, however, is to truth. The program will not reach its environmental goals. It will only help certain consumers feel good about themselves.

Implicit in the argument about local production is the assumption of market failure. People worried about food miles want to control the energy expended to bring them food, but they value not at all the land necessary to produce it or the farmer's labor to grow it and get it to market. To make food more local is to replace technology with more farmers and more land. Petroleum, it is assumed, will soon run out, but labor and land are cheap and easily increased. Sustainability advocates believe the costs of alleged global warming and other environmental damage from conventional agriculture are greater than the present economic contribution of all the prospective farmers who will leave their occupations and move to small, local, sustainable farms. Not only that, but they fail to account for the additional acres of land needed for the new farms.

Are these assumptions true? It may be that productive land and human capital will become ever more dear, while we continue to find new ways to improve our energy supplies. Organic advocates like Merrigan spend a lot of time asking for more labeling, telling the consumer where food was produced, how it was produced, what it might contain, and even who produced it. But all food already has a label that serves as a pretty good proxy for the resources used in its production. It's called the price. ♦

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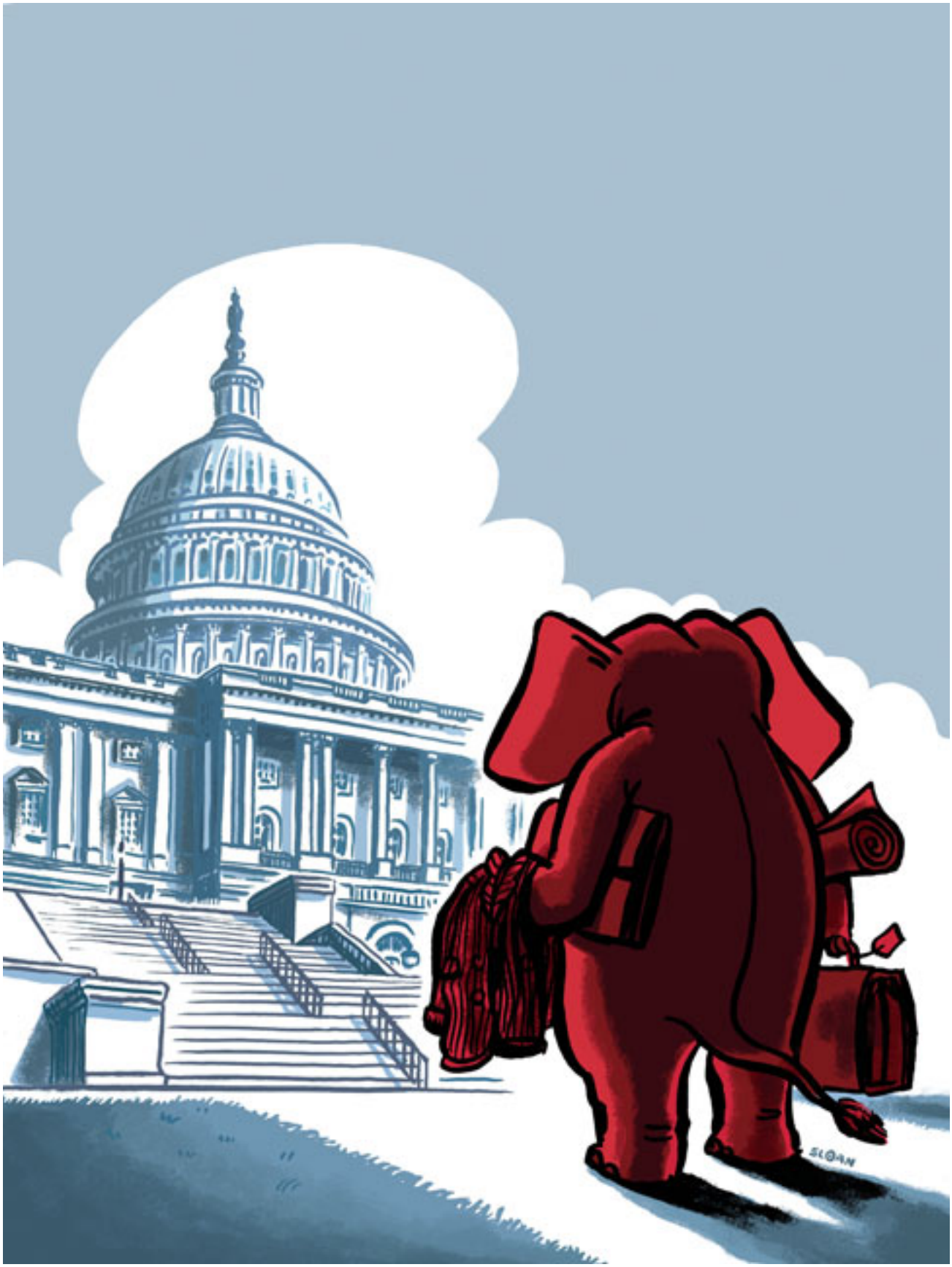

MICHAEL SLOAN

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Can Republicans Govern?

Not unless they change The Narrative.

By Jeff Bergner

Recent electoral successes, including Scott Brown's landmark victory in Massachusetts, have positioned Republicans once again for a role in governing, and far sooner than they might have supposed. But are they ready to govern? It all depends, for the problem with many Republicans (and I am a Republican) is that they, along with liberals, subscribe at a visceral level to The Narrative.

What is The Narrative? The Narrative is the official story about America. It is a story composed by the political left, which entered American public life with the progressive movement in the early 20th century and was elaborated in the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s and '40s.

The story runs like this. America was founded on the ideal of equality, though that ideal at first was barely put into practice. The story of America is one of progress toward the fulfillment of the ideal of equality. The end of slavery and the achievement of women's suffrage are landmarks in this story. All fair enough. So is—less plausibly—the federal income tax, originally established to fund the government but later used to redistribute wealth and tax advantages among Americans. Then came the many programs of direct payments to individuals, the so-called entitlements, beginning with Social Security and extending to Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, aid to dependent children, farm subsidies, and myriad others. And today the health care reform bill before Congress takes its place in America's advance toward equality. Each and every policy that aims to level distinctions between Americans has found its place within The Narrative.

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At times the progression is described as more or less inevitable. It is dressed up in rhetorical finery (befitting the progressives' debt to Hegel) as the "march of history." At other times its proponents stress the role of will, exalting the labors of progressive heroes to bring about change. But always they are certain of the single direction in which progress moves.

The Narrative holds genuine power. It permits the easy assignment of virtue and vice. Virtue belongs to those who advocate the fulfillment of equality; they are on the "right side of history," moving the country "forward." In opposition are those who seek to take the country "backward," often identified as "special interests" who favor their own well-being over the equality of all.

The Narrative also identifies the means to be employed by the virtuous. The federal government is the instrument for achieving the promise of equality. If, along the way, this government and its agents of progress should evolve into a separate political class, this is understandable; indeed, it is the more or less inevitable result of the progressives' role as the vanguard of virtue. In this way, virtue comes to be seen as concentrated, ironically, in the very institution in which the Founders feared that the corrupting effects of power might take root.

The Narrative has an international dimension. With its emphasis on the fundamental flaws in American institutions, The Narrative opposes anything that smacks of American exceptionalism. To exalt the founding would suggest that there was no compelling need to twist our institutions far beyond their original purposes in order to use them to impose equality. Besides, American exceptionalism implies the inferiority of the institutions and cultures of other nations. Only by focusing on American flaws and imperfections can we find sure and stable commonality with other peoples.

That The Narrative should move many Republicans as well as Democrats is hardly surprising. It is, after all, pervasive. This is the story presented to children at school by teachers and textbooks all across the nation. And, while

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the left-leaning American professoriate may think of itself as contrarian or skeptical, it operates in lockstep to offer The Narrative as the official view on virtually every college campus. It is reinforced at every turn by the print and electronic media, in the arts, and in every mainstream avenue of American culture.

The story is simple and powerful. It offers a ready context for interpreting politics. For the left, every issue carries a moral valence that locates it in the broader story of America. This is why Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid can stand on the Senate floor with a straight face and liken opposition to government-run health care to support for human slavery. Let's be clear: These two issues have nothing to do with each other. They aim at different ends, and they have been advocated by different parties. Indeed, one could make a reasonable case that government-run health care—with its mandates, penalties, rationing, and the like—has more in common with enslavement than with freedom.

Plausibly or not, though, The Narrative offers a way for progressives to bring the entire force of American history to bear against their opponents. This is no florid overstatement. To the contrary, The Narrative is a powerful tool designed to seize the moral high ground against opponents on issues that would otherwise need to be debated on their merits.

THE PARTY OF NO

Herein lies the problem for Republicans who subscribe to The Narrative. Even when they doubt the wisdom of "moving too fast" on a given policy initiative, they remain captive in a larger sense to The Narrative. Even as they argue that "the time is not right" to endorse the latest progressive project, they concede the substance. Now, it may be true that it is peculiarly inappropriate to launch a massive new health care entitlement, for instance, at a time of deep recession, double-digit unemployment, and low tax revenues. But that begs the larger question whether there is actually *any* time when it would be good to establish a government-run health care system in the United States. "Not now," "not so fast," "not just yet"—these are the stock-in-trade of Republicans, arguments hinting that at some later date the reform they currently oppose might win their vote. In a very real sense, Democrats are correct: Republicans these days are the party of no.

Republicans captive to The Narrative are thus condemned to a perpetual rearguard action against the consolidation of government-imposed equality. For them, the very definition of a successful administration or Congress is one that doesn't lose too much ground too fast. This is dispiriting for Republicans. It is also dispiriting to a sizable segment of the American electorate, which is uncomfortable with such a limited range of political options. Consider conservative voters: Why should they care about the 2010 elections? A Republican victory might slow the consolidation of government power, but does anyone think it would reverse it or chart a significantly different course? Is this even the goal?

COLORING OUTSIDE THE LINES

From time to time individuals break out of The Narrative. Leading radio talk show hosts do this, rhetorically, and are subjected to vicious personal attacks for their trouble. This is because The Narrative denies any legitimacy to a genuinely different point of view; any such view has been predefined as backward, regressive, self-interested, and evil. There can be no reasonable debate with opponents of The Narrative. When opponents, or even mere skeptics, question not just one or another policy notion but the story itself, the political left goes into overdrive. The entire machine is activated—political progressives, left-wing bloggers, the mainstream media, academics, late night TV hosts, and the arts community all descend with fury to attack the intelligence, the background, and the character of anyone who questions The Narrative. To question The Narrative is to question the self-ascribed virtue of the left.

Occasionally political leaders arise who go outside the official story line. Ronald Reagan was one. He was a threat, and a very attractive, genial, and well-grounded one at that. He was a candidate who had the temerity to question The Narrative. Worse yet, if elected he actually threatened to do something about it. He threatened to roll back taxes, eliminate the Department of Education, and reduce the size and scope of the federal government. To add insult to injury, he made a point of holding American exceptionalism—the "shining city on a hill"—at the very center of his political views.

For this, naturally, Reagan was vilified. His views were not merely mistaken, he personally was "stupid," an "amiable dunce." His policy prescriptions were not merely wrong, but "dangerous," "trigger-happy," "out of touch." Thirty years later, it is difficult to recapture the ferocity of the left's attacks on candidate Reagan in 1979 and 1980 and on President Reagan in the first several years of his administration. Here was no go-along, get-along guy, like so many Republican presidential candidates before and since; here was a genuine dissenter from The Narrative. And with such dissenters there can

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be no logical disputation or rational argument; their penalty must be personal annihilation.

A more limited threat to The Narrative arose in the form of President George W. Bush's short-lived effort to "privatize Social Security." Here was a far-reaching and bold proposal. It was predicated, to be sure, on an over-optimistic reading of the results of a close election in 2004—but it was nonetheless a significant departure from The Narrative. Its intent was to connect citizens more closely with their retirement income and to lessen the dependence of seniors on U.S. government-issued checks, the amounts of which are determined by the formulas of Washington politicians. This attack on The Narrative could not be allowed to stand. The idea was not merely unwise, but risky, dangerous, cruel, and heartless. Its political shelf life was brief.

Judging by its rhetoric, the left seems singularly threatened by Sarah Palin, but they can't explain why. Because she's attractive? So are most politicians, including the current president. Because she's from Alaska? So are Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski. Because she lacks "experience"? So do lots of politicians, including the current president. Does anyone imagine that a few more years of "experience" will cause Sarah Palin's critics to warm up to her? The left simply cannot supply a convincing rationale for its own mania. That a wife and mother is successful in public life and is also a conservative, populist reformer should not be possible. A political reformer opposed to the expansion of the federal government should be a contradiction in terms. Sarah Palin can undo by her simple existence every stereotype of the left's Narrative. This creates a visceral threat. It cannot be permitted, or even laughed off—she must be destroyed. The threat to The Narrative is what provokes the name-calling and bizarrely substance-free personal attacks that have flowed relentlessly from Palin's critics.

What if Republicans took back the House in 2010? What if they enjoyed the numerical advantage of today's Democrats in the House and Senate? Would they actually do anything to reverse the growth of government?

ANOTHER STORY ALTOGETHER

What if Republicans took back the House in 2010? Or, to enlarge the fantasy, what if Republicans enjoyed the numerical advantage of today's Democrats in the House and Senate? Would they actually do anything to reverse the growth of government? Republican majorities would surely strive to slow the rush to national financial ruin and rein in unsustainable deficits, and that's all to the good. Government-imposed equality might advance more slowly. But what are the chances it would be halted or reversed? For that matter, what did Republicans do as recently as five years ago, when they controlled the House, the Senate, and the White House?

So long as Republicans are enthralled by The Narrative, they will be stuck in rearguard actions. There will be no coherent set of policies toward which Republicans aim steadily over time, such as characterizes the progressive left. There will be only the (almost endearing) Republican embarrassment about governing at all.

So Republicans must ask themselves: Are they really ready to reverse the trend of more and more Americans becoming dependent upon government? Do they really deny the working assumption that most Americans don't know what's best for them, and that public policy must set them straight? Are they willing to act so that initiative does not meet bureaucratic obstacles at every turn, and regulations don't hamper every creative venture? Do they actually disdain an ideal of justice that conjures up an image of well-fed and well-tended sheep?

What if Republicans aimed at a different story altogether? What if the story of America were one in which government imposed ever less control over citizens? What if they considered every policy initiative through this lens: Does it help Americans become less, rather than more, dependent on the government? Their goal would then be to create—as best they can, and over time—a nation of self-reliant citizens, not merely "consumers" and "providers" and "practitioners" and "beneficiaries" and "recipients" and all the other less-than-fully-human descriptors of the left.

What if our national history were recast and understood in this new light? What if we reminded ourselves that it was the Republican party of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass that ended slavery and the Democratic party that dragged its feet? That it was the Republican party that pushed through women's suffrage? That Republicans like Senator Everett Dirksen were leaders in the civil rights legislation of the 1960s? The overthrow of slavery, the enfranchisement of women, the end of segregation all empowered people vis à vis their government.

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And these advances in citizen empowerment were then wrongly put to the service of (seemingly well-intentioned) egalitarian programs that result not in the improvement of America's citizenry but in their perpetual dependence?

This would be arduous work. It would require Republicans not simply to oppose current Democratic policy initiatives, but to reinterpret the broad course of American history. It would also require Republicans to end their blind acquiescence to the Democrats' demand to be judged by the purity of their intentions. The so-called purity of the Democrats' intentions should count for nothing, nothing at all. One cannot have witnessed the effects of the left's policies over the past 60 years—the poverty, the destruction of families, the coarsening of public life, the despair of dependency, the financial bankruptcy, the politicization of everything, and the lack of a global compass—one cannot have seen this and think that good intentions should count for anything.

One cannot have witnessed the effects of the left's policies over 60 years—the poverty, the destruction of families, the coarsening of public life—and think that good intentions should count for anything at all.

Walter Lippmann identified the problem as long ago as 1937:

> In the name of progress, men who call themselves communists, socialists, fascists, nationalists, progressives, and even liberals, are unanimous in holding that government with its instruments of coercion must by commanding the people how they shall live, direct the course of civilization. . . . So universal is the dominion of this dogma over the minds of contemporary men that no one is taken seriously as a statesman or a theorist who does not come forward with proposals to magnify the power of public officials and to extend and multiply their intervention in human affairs.

Republicans will learn to govern well only when they free themselves from the pseudo-inevitability of this dogma.

What if? What if a new Republican interpretation of American history succeeded in breaking apart the false conflation of Democratic efforts to consolidate power with political virtue?

First, Republicans might lose their shame about actually governing. The Republicans' badge of honor—their reluctance to govern, their hesitance to press an affirmative agenda of their own—might be overcome. Republicans might actually learn to use the levers of power, if only to reverse our national course.

Second, Republicans would discover what they have lacked so long: a cornucopia of policy ideas that could shape a legislative and regulatory agenda for decades to come. It is not that Republicans haven't put forward good initiatives from time to time; what they've lacked is a long-term vision that produces a wide and coherent menu of policies. Though correct in principle, the mantra of "lower taxes and less regulation" is too narrow to amount to such a vision. An affirmative vision of ever-expanding citizen empowerment is one that can generate initiatives and policies that build upon each other, unlike today's almost random occasional departures from the unrelenting growth of the left-Hegelian administrative state.

Such a policy agenda would address at least four broad areas:

(1) *Entitlements.* Direct payments to Americans are bankrupting the country. Worse, they are creating massive and unhealthy dependence and ever-expanding state power.

■ On health care, we should do no (more) harm. Republicans have rightly opposed creation of a massive new government-run entitlement. But Republicans had 15 years between the last attempt to impose such a program in 1994 and the current attempt, and in that time they failed to address the genuine health care concerns of the American people. They should not make that mistake again. Republicans should support cost containment by fostering insurance competition across state lines, the expansion of health savings accounts, sensible tort reform, and insurance portability. These and similar steps will solidify the private sector foundation of the American health care system and obviate any need for yet another Democratic effort at nationalization.

■ Many direct payment programs, such as agricultural commodity support programs, aim to ameliorate systemic risk. They should be replaced with risk insurance, priced to reflect best estimates of true risk.

■ Such programs are designed to carry Americans through temporary difficulties. Too often the programs are extended and re-extended, sometimes more or less permanently. Let's take a page from our recent experience with the Troubled Asset Relief Program. The conditions for receiving TARP funds were such that banks sought to escape from the program as soon as they could. Let's reorient our social safety net programs so they meet

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genuine needs but also encourage recipients to provide for themselves as soon as possible. The successful welfare reform of the 1990s—which the left wrongly predicted would be catastrophic—provides an excellent model.

■ The hardest entitlements to reform are the most popular and expensive—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. All of these are unsustainable—bankrupt—in their current form. It is not a political prejudice, but a mathematical certainty that they will have to be reformed. When the time comes, Republicans should support reforms that adjust age levels, means-test benefits, and wherever possible move Americans toward private insurance and retirement plans. Social Security and Medicare have both traded on the now false notion that they are social insurance programs, when they are in fact generational welfare schemes. Congressman Paul Ryan has proposed a thoughtful "road map" for needed reforms.

(2) *Free speech.* Freedom of speech is vital to a free people, but is everywhere under assault by the left. It belongs at the center of a new agenda.

■ We need new laws protecting the constitutional right to the free expression of religious views.

■ The regulation of campaign speech should end, a project the Supreme Court happily advanced in a recent decision.

■ A new job description is needed for the Federal Election Commission, restricting it to providing financial transparency in political campaigns.

■ Public financing of presidential campaigns should end. This is a highly unpopular provision of law, of which the Obama campaign made a special mockery.

■ Taxpayer-financed speech such as National Public Radio should end.

■ Federal assistance should not flow to colleges or universities that adopt "speech codes."

(3) *The federal government.* The federal government, with its 2.8 million civilian employees, has become a self-perpetuating machine, insulated from the problems of ordinary Americans by ever-greater disparities in job security, pay, and benefits. The average government salary is north of $70,000, and a fifth of all federal employees make more than $100,000, in a country where the per capita income is just over $40,000.

■ Since federal employees are not smarter or more virtuous than other Americans, we should bring federal salaries and benefits back into line with those of the private sector.

■ Federal government employee unions have become venal "special interests," providing campaign contributions and other election support directly to the officials who set their salaries and benefits. This should end, if necessary by banning federal employee unions—which were first authorized by an executive order in 1962.

■ To make it clear that elected officials are not expected to make permanent careers in Washington, even opponents of term limits (like me) could agree to abolish retirement benefits for elected and presidentially appointed officials.

(4) *American exceptionalism.* Let's aim to be respected abroad, not loved.

■ America was built on the strength of immigrants. A more open and generous provision for legal immigration would welcome people who want to share in the American dream and are prepared to follow our laws. This can make us stronger. But let's also defend our borders and end illegal immigration.

■ America has a special role in helping people in other lands who share our values and who wish to be free. We should champion people who seek to free themselves from oppressive governments. We should give them moral support and, where prudent, material aid.

■ We should be staunch supporters of free trade and investment.

■ We should defend Internet freedom, even if this results in diplomatic difficulties with nations that seek to control their people's access to information.

■ We should reorient our public diplomacy away from selling American consumerism and popular music and otherwise currying favor with foreign populations. Current polling abroad shows this doesn't work anyway. Instead, we should remind the world that we are a nation of free people, who cherish free speech and individual conscience and oppose religious fanaticism and political violence. If other people hold other values, so be it.

None of this will go down easily. There will be bitter claims that Republicans are "politicizing" matters. This is straight out of the left's playbook: Politicize everything, and then scream loudly if anyone seeks redress.

Formulating a new American narrative and governing in accord with it is not a task for the faint-hearted. But the effort is worth it. Unlike the left's initiatives, too many of which must be disguised and misrepresented at every turn, these initiatives can be crafted to win genuine popular support. These initiatives, moreover, are likely to achieve their stated purposes, unlike those of the left, and can be expanded and developed over time. Tocqueville pointed out in the 1830s that strong forces in modern democracies press toward equality and passivity at the expense of liberty and self-government. But he also noted that these forces are not fated to prevail. ♦

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Nick Nolte, Thandie Newton in 'Jefferson in Paris' (1995)

BUENA VISTA PICTURES / COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION

Monticello Mythology

What Sally Hemings tells us about our times

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

Since the hack journalist and thwarted office-seeker James Callender first published his scurrilities, the Jefferson/Hemings controversy has had a run of nearly two centuries. And the longer it continues, the more it carries the marks of a *kulturkampf*: a culture war.

We're dealing here, after all, with the world-historical figure of Thomas Jefferson, prince of the Enlightenment, apostle of government by consent and religious tolerance, as well as with the discordant ghost of human slavery. Few could now be unaware of the core charges: that, as American minister to France (1784-89), the widowed Jefferson took as his mistress a teenaged slave girl, Sally Hemings, reputedly the half-sister of his late wife, and led with her a long dalliance resulting in an uncertain number of children of mixed race.

That there is slight evidence of this alleged liaison, and much negative evidence, seems to make little or no difference. The pseudo-historical drama is now deeply inscribed in public consciousness by movies, televised "docudrama," sloppy journalism, and historical polemics. It conforms to a mythic pattern, and such patterns are in their nature resistant to prosaic facts, especially when tinged by romance.

In Defense of Thomas Jefferson
The Sally Hemings Sex Scandal
by William G. Hyland Jr.
Thomas Dunne/St Martin's, 320 pp., $26.95

William Hyland Jr., as a practicing lawyer, frames his contribution to the controversy with courtroom rules. He summons virtual witnesses, testimony, and evidence in Jefferson's defense and the case, so far as it goes, is compelling. There are, of course, essential differences between a legal process and the more empirical processes of historical inquiry; and in the latter there can be no final acquittal.

Notwithstanding its limitations and flaws, however, Hyland's is a refreshing exception to the recent deluge of anti-Jefferson tracts, a reversion to the state of play before Fawn Brodie published her readable polemic 30 years ago. Brodie claimed that she wished to "humanize" Jefferson, and under that rubric, revived the dormant sex charges. But an unshaken Jeffersonian establish-

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ment (or "mafia," as detractors liked to call it) still held the fort.

No longer. Even the keepers of Jefferson's Monticello have gone over to the detractors; and at least two panjandrums of the University of Virginia history department (one the holder of a "Jefferson" chair) are among those who argue the great man's guilt. The question is whether this reversal has resulted from new and probative evidence or from mere shifts of historical fashion and fortune.

In fact, the only new evidence bearing on the alleged Jefferson-Hemings affair appeared about 10 years ago in a test of Jefferson family genes, performed at a laboratory in Oxford and hastily trumpeted in an article in the science journal *Nature*. Proof, at last, of Jefferson's illicit dalliance? Many leapt to that conclusion; and given the authority (and lay misunderstanding) of molecular biology, the Oxford "evidence" all but won the day.

The reality belied that impression, however: The male genetic material stemmed not from Jefferson himself or his direct descendants (he had no surviving male children), but from a Jefferson uncle. Insofar as that patrilineal DNA had become entwined in the past with that of the Hemings family, the junction could have happened in any generation and, among Thomas Jefferson's contemporaries, by the agency of one or more of at least eight male relatives.

The Jefferson family—his granddaughter Mrs. Coolidge and his grandson Jefferson Randolph—had long entertained three traditional suspects: the president's nephews, Samuel and Peter Carr, orphaned sons of his deceased sister, and his younger brother, Randolph, a light-witted cutup, often a visitor at Monticello, who liked to fiddle and dance the nights away in the slave quarters. The only contemporary eyewitness, the overseer Edmund Bacon, "saw another man [not Thomas Jefferson, he made clear] leaving Sally's room many mornings."

As for Sally Hemings, often portrayed in apocryphal accounts as a siren and seductress, she was all of eight years old when her master left Monticello for Paris. We may accordingly discount the notion (a favorite of Professor Brodie's) that when Jefferson cited "mulatto" soil colors in his European travel diaries he was indulging an erotic fantasy. It was, moreover, not Jefferson but relatives at home who chose Sally Hemings as Polly Jefferson's companion on the transatlantic voyage. When the two children reached London, en route to Paris, Abigail Adams viewed Sally Hemings as the more childlike of the two. She was, after

Jeffersons at play

all, 14 years old and doubtless bewildered and disoriented. The ship's captain who had brought the two girls from Virginia was of the view that the immature Sally ought to be sent back; and so she might have been. So much for the notion that Jefferson contrived to screen the importation of a longed-for mistress by sending for his younger daughter.

The tissue of hearsay and distortion that characterizes popular versions of the "affair" is to be expected now that historical analysis is a fading art. But that hardly excuses professional historians who have flocked to join the parade of Jefferson detractors. The case of Joseph Ellis is typical. In the earlier Jefferson biography *American Sphinx*, Ellis discounted the Hemings liaison. He then underwent a conversion in the face of the Oxford DNA tests, and on the PBS *Newshour* pronounced that the case had now been proved.

His homework was slack, to say the least. Ellis had never heard of Randolph Jefferson, the suspect younger brother; nor did he understand the crucial difference in probative value between the patrilineal genetic materials tested in Oxford and the matrilineal (mitochondrial) DNA used at nearly the same time to verify the Romanov remains before their reburial in St. Petersburg. (He cited them as precisely parallel cases.)

William Hyland has performed a useful service, but there is an amusing irony here. He rightly scoffs at a number of weird arguments, including one theory, espoused in an 18th-century treatise by a certain Dr. Tissot, that since masturbation is harmful (a medical superstition of the time), and since Jefferson owned a copy of Tissot's treatise, he must—ergo!—have been spooked into taking a mistress as the recipient of his stray seed! Ludicrous, both in premise and inference, though typical of the bizarre theories so often called into play in this controversy.

Yet Hyland goes in for some dubious medical speculation of his own: Since, he argues, Jefferson suffered from midlife with a variety of complaints—arthritis, migraine headaches, and chronic digestive problems—he must have lacked the libido for a sustained sexual affair. He cites "Jefferson researcher" Cynthia Burton, a voice for the defense, who is of the view that Jefferson's "fertility had been waning for over 30 years" when Sally Hemings was allegedly bearing his children. How this could possibly be known without modern fertility testing and sperm-counting is a mystery.

Obviously, such speculation, whatever its argumentative thrust, is no more than a sideshow. But now, as in the heyday of the vogue of "psychobiography" that Fawn Brodie drew upon so heavily 35 years ago, attempts to read conditions of mind or body (to say nothing of sexual desire) into the past without benefit of clinical evidence are futile, when not ridiculous.

One imaginary couch is as tricky as any other. ♦

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B&A

Natural Reich

Martin Heidegger didn't accomodate the Nazis; he embraced them. **BY MARK BLITZ**

This book, which appeared in 2005 in France and is newly translated into English, has caused a stir, and rightly so. Emmanuel Faye argues that Martin Heidegger's work is so closely connected to the Nazis that it should be shelved with books from the Third Reich and not permitted to share space with Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant. Heidegger's works are artifacts of darkness, not paths toward Enlightenment. By design, they perpetuate Nazism long after its battlefield defeat. His effect on philosophy is pernicious.

Heidegger
The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935
by Emmauel Faye,
translated by Michael B. Smith
Yale, 464 pp., $40

Faye's study differs in several respects from others that show the connection between Heidegger and the Nazis. He claims that Heidegger's writing and teaching was (and is) primarily a defense of Nazism and Hitlerism, not something independent of them that discovered an ugly affinity and use. He uses notes and summaries from unpublished courses from 1933-35 that demonstrate Heidegger's racial teaching. And he compares Heidegger at length to contemporaries and followers who worked with the Nazis, such as Carl Schmitt and Erik Wolf, to show the deep similarities among their arguments. Only the willfully ignorant could deny the connections Faye draws between Heidegger and Hitler.

Much of what Faye argues is based on what is already well known. In 1933 the Nazis made Heidegger rector of the university in Freiburg. During his rectorate he attempted to set scholarship and administration on the Nazi path, appointing sympathetic deans, and leading or organizing reeducation retreats. He enthusiastically worked for the Nazification, the "coordination," of academic institutions. He made speeches and wrote messages that urged support for Hitler and his policies.

"To the man of this unprecedented will, to our Führer Adolf Hitler," he concluded one Freiburg address, "a threefold 'Sieg Heil.'" Who, upon hearing such a statement, would not know where things stood? After the war, authorities banned him from the classroom for several years; figures such as Heidegger's erstwhile friend Karl Jaspers were among those who urged the prohibition.

The attention that scholars paid to these facts varied with the ebb and flow of Heidegger's influence. Heidegger resigned the rectorate after a year in office. This made it easier for the credulous to believe the excuses and explanations that he and his supporters offered for his outrageous behavior. Others correctly saw his explanations primarily as lies and half-truths. For the past 15 or 20 years, however, largely because of the publication of a biography by Heinrich Ott filled with damning facts about Heidegger, no fair-minded person has been able to deny the seriousness of Heidegger's collaboration. Although the peak of Heidegger's active political support for the Nazis may have been the Freiburg rectorate, denunciations of Jewish colleagues, encouragement of teachers who supported the Nazis, and involvement in Nazi efforts such as the Academy for German Law preceded the rectorate and continued after it. There is no evidence at any point of active political opposition.

The issue of Heidegger's association with the Nazis has, for scholars, as much to do with the link between his thought and actions as it does with his actions themselves. Here, too, awareness of the link ebbs and flows. Because the tie is less obvious, or easier to deny, than the political facts of the rectorate, and because it more clearly impugns his followers' judgment, many academics have tried to ignore or obfuscate it. Nonetheless, several among Heidegger's first group of students, such as Karl Lowith, recognized it quickly, and wrote about it during and just after World War II. There have been other works available for decades that also make the link visible. Not until the fascist connections of the leading literary deconstructionist, Paul de Man, became obvious 20 years ago, however, did it become impossible for Heidegger scholars to ignore the subject. The attempts to explain away any link between Heidegger's thought and action took on new levels of sophistication, but the effort to explain the link honestly proceeded nonetheless.

Faye's argument is an extreme version of those that tie Heidegger's thought to his Nazism. His claim is that Heidegger's understanding of Being, essence, destiny, and people is at root nothing but a distortion of the central elements of philosophy, a distortion that is meant to serve the Nazis. He certainly believes that this was true during the early 1930s. He also believes it so, in whole or in part, for the late 1930s and '40s when Heidegger lectured at length on Nietzsche. He further claims that Heidegger's successful rehabilitation of his reputation after the 1950s was governed by his wish to continue insinuating Nazism into philosophy. Indeed, he thinks that Heidegger's understanding of destiny, decision, and the "people" in *Being and Time* (1927) was similarly perverse. Although Faye does not, and could not, show that Heidegger's work was Nazi ideology from beginning to end, this is the thrust of his claim, at least from the mid-1920s on.

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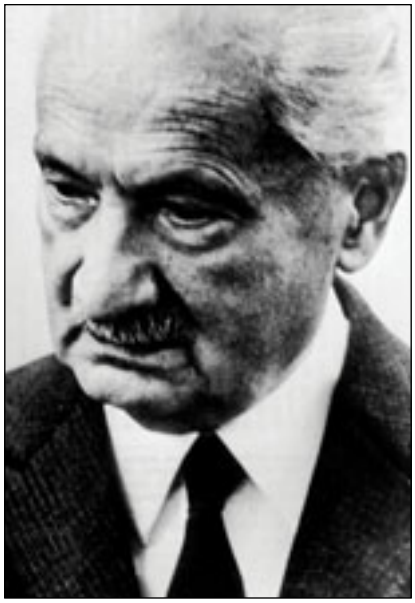
Faye tries to prove his point in detail only for the lectures and speeches that Heidegger gave around the time that he was rector. Much that he discusses makes visible connections that others already have shown between some of Heidegger's central terms and Nazi language. What Faye also makes evident, however—and in some cases newly evident—is Heidegger's orientation not only to Nazism in general but to Hitler in particular, the totalizing standpoint of his view of politics and, especially, the place of racism in his understanding.

Heidegger or his friends may have sided with this or that refinement in racial teaching, denounced crude biologism in favor of something more spiritual, engaged in vague discussions of the "Asiatic" and not always in the crudest ethnic slanders, and talked endlessly of war, struggle, and confrontation, while leaving it a bit vague if they had in mind sports, academic back-stabbing, self-control, or the Luftwaffe. None of this confuses Faye, who understands that, whatever the talk, primacy is to belong to the Germans, the central enemies are the Jews, race and *Volk* are never separate from blood and soil, and war often meant just that. The destiny of the German people under the Leader's direction, something that Heidegger affirmed on the basis of his understanding in *Being and Time*, had consequences that expanded from subjugation, to brutality, to terror, to annihilation. One need not lay at Heidegger's feet encouragement for each of the Nazis' criminal acts to wonder just where, in his mind, such deeds would corrupt his words, or show their unbearable meaning.

Despite Faye's evidence and discussion, however, it is not clear that the affinity between Heidegger and the Nazis is an identity, or that his primary intention was to distort philosophy for their sake. Authentic resolve within the people's destiny, Heidegger's standpoint for choice, can result in different actions in different times and circumstances. Heidegger's active political support for the Nazis waned, for example, and during the 1960s his concerns about technology had something in common with the Greens. Heidegger's views, moreover, can certainly be short-sighted, even in his own terms, because the difference between understanding things as they truly are and, instead, being mastered by public sentiments, is often difficult to discern and always difficult to sustain. One might even try to argue that Heidegger's later praise of the Nazis for their "encounter with global technology" shows a difference between his goal in supporting them and their own goals for themselves.

Although the affinity between Heidegger and the Nazis is not an identity,



Martin Heidegger, ca. 1955

KEYSTONE / EYEDEA / EVERETT COLLECTION

one should recognize that Heidegger's political standpoint is always profoundly illiberal. His situating of all activities within a people's destiny eliminates the grounds on which to defend one's own independence within the political order, or to understand properly activities whose soul transcends any political order. The distortion of the free and the cosmopolitan also leads to inordinate hopes for political action, when it is not fostering inordinate despair. Heidegger's support of the Nazis is so far from an accident that Faye's overstatement of its inevitability is much closer to the truth than the opposing view.

It is also true that, despite Faye's claims, many of Heidegger's arguments and analyses remain forceful and arguably correct. That he could assimilate his analyses, or the language of his analyses, to the Nazis does not make them wrong. Faye does not succeed in showing that Heidegger's discussions in, say, *Being and Time*, are mistaken, nor does he attempt seriously to do this. He correctly sees the importance of Heidegger's discussions of the people and destiny there, as many scholars still do not, but he then downplays the status of individual anxiety, guilt, and the anticipation of death. He attacks Heidegger's attacks on Cartesian subjectivity, but offers little convincing in reply. He acts incorrectly as if Heidegger's discussions of being and essence are only attempts to fill these terms with Nazi offal, and he apparently thinks that Heidegger's discussions of other thinkers are nothing but strategies to dismiss them altogether when they cannot be made useful politically.

Yet, if this is so, why are Heidegger's discussions of them so dense and detailed? Faye tellingly uncovers the connection between Heidegger's first delivery of what became a famous address on art and the Nazi's 1935 Nuremberg laws. But he then seems to reduce Heidegger's thought on art to this connection. In general, Faye discounts too much of what one learns from Heidegger about man, being, temporality, art, nature, theoretical and practical understanding, truth, guilt, death, and technology.

Intelligent young men and women will come upon these questions and phenomena, and will want to examine them. They will also come upon the apparent confines of our own liberalism, the flattening of our aspirations, the vulgarization of our arts and education, the dominance of technological and economic ways of thinking. These difficulties are brought out in Heidegger's works, among others. We must learn to elevate ourselves even if only to preserve ourselves. Heidegger should still be read, and his arguments pondered; but the reading should be prefaced with a reminder of his political actions, and of the horrors perpetrated by the Leader he glorified. Attention should always be paid to the question of the link between action and thought, the central question of political philosophy. So we are indebted to Faye's book, and to the passion for justice with which it is written. ♦

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B&A

Mika's Choice

The cost of careerism for a shot of 'Morning Joe.'

BY SABRINA L. SCHAEFFER

Nearly 50 years after *The Feminine Mystique*, the consensus appears to be that women have achieved parity with men in nearly all aspects of their professional lives. The larger question still looming in many women's minds is not about shattering glass ceilings but enjoying this equality. The recent Shriver Report, which discussed how government and communities can support a nation in which half the workforce is made up of women, was simply the most recent and well-publicized work in a line of research devoted to the new gender landscape.

All Things at Once
by Mika Brzezinski
Weinstein, 288 pp., $24.95

Overwhelmingly, the common theme is not how to achieve equality in the workplace but how to enable women to "have it all." Is it possible for women to pursue careers while fulfilling their traditional roles as wives and mothers? What does it mean to succeed? And when will women finally be happy? *All Things at Once* is an attempt to understand this new gender equality and what it means for women and their families. The cohost of a popular cable television program, "Morning Joe," Mika Brzezinski offers a tell-all of her climb up the competitive ladder of television journalism and her effort to do "all things at once."

Her chronicle makes a running start, offering readers—especially young women—sound advice. At a time when women are encouraged to pursue a career, almost to the exclusion of marrying and having a family, Brzezinski is forthright in her criticism: "There's nothing wrong," she writes, "with putting both family and work at the top of your list of priorities, giving each equal value and care, right from the start." In fact, she goes right to the edge of claiming that the modern feminist movement failed women altogether: "For the life of me," she says, "I can't understand why so many women wait until the age of thirty to even think about children. And that's just the *start* of the conversation for them."

Despite her firm hand, Brzezinski isn't calling for the return of Betty Draper. In fact, she makes it clear that there will be times when a spouse and children "needn't be front *and* center." But as it turns out, in Brzezinski's case, these "times" were *most* of the time, and the focal point is a terrifying near-tragedy in which Brzezinski describes being so fatigued—presumably from trying to uphold an impossible work/life balancing act—that she tumbles down a flight of stairs while holding her four-month-old daughter.

At first blush, she seems to be painting an honest picture of what gender parity means for a lot of career women—juggling, stumbling, and sometimes falling.

And while she claims it was a huge "wake-up call," an incident that led her to "take a step back," that wasn't quite the case. The fact is that Brzezinski chose a very demanding career—at times to the detriment of her family, as she freely admits—and her fall was a function of anchoring an overnight newscast, not a result of running frantically back and forth from the boardroom to the bake sale.

If, by no longer doing "all things at once," Brzezinski means she moved up the ladder and found a job with slightly less brutal hours, then that's a different story than the one she pretends to tell. Yes, she tried to have it all—professional success, family, even personal time—but in the end she describes her priorities clearly: She "relished the positive attention" that came from her television work, and when she was fired from CBS and returned home, "the role of wife and mother didn't even come close to defining me."

Every woman's work/life preferences are different, but Brzezinski opens herself up to judgment. She is frank about her absence from her two daughters' lives, telling readers that, even after the 9/11 attacks, she didn't make it home to see her children for three weeks. And even during non-critical times (such as writing this book) she misses her older daughter's school graduation.

Readers are likely to feel embarrassed for her as she opens up about her choices—and I suspect many would be repulsed by her glibness. But her decision to pursue a career, often at the expense of her family, is not the problem of this memoir; the drawback is that she tries to engage in an important conversation in a dishonest manner.

In one of many feigned moments of honesty she writes, "I tried double-hard to be everything to everybody and got quite far." Well, sort of. As she describes it, she tried her best to be everything at *work*. But the same cannot be said of her efforts at home.

Brzezinski had an opportunity to offer something original to this ongoing conversation, something that might even offend both men and women: Sometimes women are going to place their careers way above their families, and in the end, they're going to be satisfied with their decision. Readers might have chastised her selfishness and called her nasty names, but she would have shown honestly that the work/life scale doesn't always balance out. ♦

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'Napoleon at Jena' by Horace Vernet

B&A

Lessons of War

What the Prussians learned at the hands of Napoleon.

BY THOMAS RID

It must have been an eerie Monday afternoon, on October 13, 1806. Napoleon rode through Jena, where French troops had already started looting. Hegel, in his study, was working on the last pages of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. From a window the philosopher was able to spot "the Emperor" ride out of town: "Truly it is a remarkable sensation to see such an individual on horseback, raising his arm over the world and ruling it," he later wrote to a friend. Europe was on the eve of one of the most momentous battles of its bloody history. Before sunrise on the next day, the fields still covered by mist, Bonaparte ordered an attack.

The Cognitive Challenge of War
Prussia 1806
by Peter Paret
Princeton, 176 pp., $22.95

The previous Friday in Saalfeld, an advance guard under the command of Prince Louis Ferdinand, nephew of Frederick the Great, became encircled by lead units under the command of Jean Lannes, one of France's most capable generals. The prince, bravely leading a cavalry attack to break through the French lines, lost his life and 1,700 men. Morale in Prussia's army and its Saxon contingent began slipping. The Duke of Brunswick, who faced up to Napoleon, assembled the bulk of his 161,000 troops 140 miles south of Berlin, by Weimar, Goethe's hometown, and Jena.

In 1806 the Grande Armée was at its apex, mature and supple, not yet worn. Prussia's traditionalism proved self-destructive against an agile enemy fired up by patriotic fervor. German officers, for example, wore braised hats, sometimes with plumes, and distinctive dress—and thus neatly marked the best targets for French marksmen. When the Prince of Hohenlohe, a hapless Prussian commander, urgently needed reinforcements after Napoleon's attack at Jena, Ernst von Rüchel, a Prussian general of the old mold, did not rush his reinforcements into battle but orderly marched them in step, aligned, "as on parade," one witness recorded. Clausewitz, who knew Rüchel well, quipped that the general—whom he called "concentrated acid of pure Prussianism"—trusted that Frederician tactics could "overcome anything that had emerged from the unsoldierly Revolution." How wrong he was. Prussia lost tens of thousands of men, together with its glory as a formidable military power.

"No one," Hegel jotted down, "imagined war as we have seen it."

Prussia's reaction to what could not be imagined, the shock of 1806, is the subject of *The Cognitive Challenge of War*. In what turned out to be a spectacularly productive quest, Germany's greatest minds—among them artists, writers, and military intellectuals—went to work and wrestled with the consequences of France's revolutionary wars. Paret is at his best when he deciphers some of the paintings and engravings that depict the battle. Perhaps the most impressive is Caspar David Friedrich's *The Chasseur in the Forest*. It is an elaborate allusion to Prussia's defeat. On a narrow opening framed by a stand of firs, a *chasseur à cheval*, his horse and strength vanished, walks slowly into the dark forest. Watching is a raven on a tree stump, symbols of death.

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ERICH LESSING

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"The man alone on alien, immeasurable ground, which may hide unseen dangers, will meet death," Paret writes. *Geht seinem Tod entgegen* is the German expression re-created by Friedrich. Contemporary opinion was in no doubt about the painting's meaning, although not all appreciated it. Goethe, whose house had been ransacked by French troops in that October of 1806, dismissively called it "new-German-religious-patriotic art."

Another artistic milestone is *Wallenstein*, Friedrich Schiller's trilogy on the Thirty Years' War. Schiller had served as a regimental physician in the army of Württemberg in the early 1780s, but deserted to dedicate himself to writing. The revolutionary government in Paris had even awarded him honorary citizenship. In 1794 he began writing a trilogy on Albrecht Wallenstein, a Bohemian noble who rose to fame as a capable commander. Although Wallenstein had been assassinated nearly two centuries earlier, Schiller was writing contemporary drama as well as a historical one, Goethe noted. Wallenstein, like Napoleon, was a minor noble, energetic, brilliant, who also fought war "in a new way" and was seen as a threat to the established order.

Schiller's characters discuss the perennial elements of war and politics in depth. In the second play, Count Piccolomini, a general and secret ally of the emperor, has a conversation with his son Max, an idealist. The father, concerned that his son has been "educated" by 15 years of strife and never seen peace, tells him somewhat condescendingly that "even in war, what ultimately matters is not war." Max, somewhat agitated, stresses the significance of communication with the opponent, and adds: "For if war does not already cease in war, from where should peace return?"

These lines, Paret says, could as well be Clausewitz's. And indeed, military thought is the actual focus of this absorbing essay. A few years after Jena and Auerstedt, early in 1812, Napoleon demanded that Prussia supply troops for his invasion of Russia. For Clausewitz this was unacceptable and he resigned his commission in the Prussian Army in order to fight with Russian troops against the French. In an article explaining that decision, next to a sentence on the character of supreme command, he scribbled on the margin, "Wallenstein. Schiller."

Albrecht Wallenstein

Germans—most notably Clausewitz—used the 'mask of history,' from Arminius to Wallenstein, to come to terms with innovation and war in their own age.

So frequent were Clausewitz's references to Schiller that Paret thinks the philosopher of war "takes over some of Schiller's expressions to formulate his ideas."

And those Clausewitzian ideas have come to define much of Western military thought. Often they were contrasted with the work of another military writer who served in 1806, Antoine de Jomini, a Franco-Swiss officer with a stellar career under Napoleon. Jomini attempted to find the eternal rules and "fundamental principles" of warfare, such as the right use of interior lines and decisive points, a winning formula that is "immutable, independent of types of weapon, time, and country." For his Prussian competitor, this was nonsense. It is not without irony that the discussion between the two titans, like some of their concepts, may be a perennial feature of warfare. "Efforts were . . . made to equip the conduct of war with principles, rules, or even systems," Paret quotes Clausewitz. But the old master was skeptical. In a section headed "Theory should be Study, not Doctrine," he writes that theory of war must not be "a positive doctrine, a sort of manual for action." Theory is meant to guide the reader in his self-education, "not to accompany him to the battlefield."

Peter Paret's small book is masterfully constructed. He has set out to "consider specific events" without losing sight of the general issues they exemplify. The reader learns how Germans—most notably Clausewitz—used the "mask of history," from Arminius to Wallenstein, to come to terms with innovation and war in their own age. The reader, after putting down this book, may wonder, in a moment of reflection, if Paret has not tried to use his own mask of history: We again live in an age where war is fought in a new way, again posing a major cognitive challenge. Yet, Paret tells us through Clausewitz (and through Wallenstein), some common characteristics remain unchanged. War is recognized as a complex and ambiguous social, organizational, and political activity, dominated not just by reason but also emotion.

"Once combat begins and people die, it may be difficult to remember the instrumentality of war," Paret warns. Sacrifice creates value. And a point may be reached when "war has changed from a tool of policy to a force that imposes—or seeks to impose—its own emotional demands." It may be of little immediate solace that defeat, as Paret illustrates in 1806, seems to unleash far more creative and productive *esprit* than victory. ♦

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B&A

Founders' Keepers

The modern application of the principles of government.

BY JOHN B. KIENKER

At the end of this new book, Matthew Spalding calls for "a commitment at every level of education to promote awareness and appreciation of the true principles of the American Founding." Only in this way, he argues, can we restore the public consensus necessary to sustain a healthy pluralism. Otherwise, we will continue to regress down the path of might-makes-right politics with bureaucrats and interest groups vying to have their way through administrative agencies and the courts.

We Still Hold These Truths
Rediscovering Our Principles, Reclaiming Our Future
by Matthew Spalding
ISI, 288 pp., $26.95

Spalding's own effort is an excellent example of what such a renewed civic education would look like. Well organized, clearly written, expertly argued, *We Still Hold These Truths* provides, perhaps, the single best introduction to the political thought of the American Founding. Spalding largely takes a unifying approach to the Founding Fathers and the scholars who have studied them. We may speak of an American founding because there was a "principled consensus," he writes, among those great men of the late 18th century, "transcending important differences of practical application and party competition." He acknowledges the legitimate contributions of different elements to that consensus, such as British custom, colonial experience, Christian faith, Lockean liberalism, and classical republicanism. But it is clear that he is most interested in the role of political ideas. Early chapters provide just enough historical context to set the scene, and those interested in further reading will find footnotes modestly sprinkled throughout and a superb bibliographic essay.

Spalding builds his study around 10 principles that define American government: liberty, equality, natural rights, consent of the governed, religious freedom, private property, the rule of law, constitutionalism, self-government, and independence. Each illuminates a different aspect of the American experiment, from the political theory of the Declaration of Independence and the structure of the Constitution, to family law and education, citizenship, and foreign policy.

Although the idea of an intelligible, universal standard of justice had been working itself out in Western thought for centuries, the United States was the first nation explicitly established on the basis of the "laws of nature and nature's God." Spalding highlights several remarkable innovations that followed from this claim, including "the principle of religious freedom as a natural right," which he calls "a great achievement, perhaps the greatest, of the American Founding." Freedom of conscience tempered reason's and revelation's often bloody claims to rule, and instead united them where they agree on morality and politics—in the process adding a further support to limited government.

Instead of keeping property concentrated in a few hands, the Founders' dynamic approach to protecting it opened up opportunities to the industrious and creative. The book provides a useful overview, too, of the Founders' foreign policy, which was guided by "a worldview that was both principled and practical" and from which today's "utopian idealists" and "vulgar realists" can learn much.

Spalding is especially good at showing that the American Founders were not indifferent to the kinds of choices free men would make. Self-government was understood as both political and moral self-government: Despite "important tensions," the Founders could "favor individual rights and promote public virtue at the same time." George Washington declared, in his first Inaugural Address, that "the foundation of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality." John Adams warned that our government "was made only for a moral and religious people," else "avarice, ambition, revenge, or gallantry, would break the strongest cords of our Constitution as a whale goes through a net." Thomas Jefferson was the proud father of the University of Virginia precisely because it was to be a school of republican orthodoxy, educating citizens to understand and perpetuate good government. (Before devoting himself to this endeavor in his retirement, Jefferson, along with almost every other prominent founder, had called for a national university dedicated to the same purpose.)

Then why, if the Founders did so much to perpetuate the moral character and devotion that constitutional government needs to sustain itself, do we find ourselves, as Spalding laments, "on a course of self-destruction"? In a chapter entitled "A New Republic," he details how Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Croly, John Dewey, and other progressives of their day drove modern liberalism's rejection of natural rights and constitutionalism, and its subtle redefinition of freedom and equality to feign some continuity with the American creed. One is left to wonder why the Founders' ideas didn't prove harder to dislodge than the progressives' today.

Of course, Spalding's title sounds a more defiant note, proclaiming not that we once held these truths but that we *still* hold them. And paraphrasing Abraham Lincoln, he concludes that

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> It is not the affirmation of a peculiar set of antiquated claims that tie us to America as much as it is our common recognition of transcendent truths that bind us all together and across time to the patriots of 1776. Only with this sure foundation can we go forward as a nation, addressing the great policy questions before us and continuing to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Spalding has not penned a manifesto simply to rally the right. He has reclaimed the best of the American political tradition for all Americans, as their birthright and sacred obligation, and as a rebuke to the enervating tendencies of the past century. He reminds us of the civic duty our forefathers bequeathed to us to educate each generation in this rich tradition, and provides a shining example of how it ought to be done. ♦

B&A

Baltimore Bartleby

A misanthrope is suddenly awakened by love.

BY DIANE SCHARPER

At 60, Liam Pennywell has his share of senior moments—perhaps more than his share. Worse, he's unable to connect with people on anything but a superficial level. Worse yet, he doesn't know how disconnected he is.

Noah's Compass, Anne Tyler's eighteenth novel, offers Liam the opportunity to fall in love and start over. It's a modest love, more like that found in the poetry of John Donne than that on the pages of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. How Liam acts on that opportunity is surprising, selfless, and morally correct. His decision to do the right thing (which doesn't happen to be what he wants to do) is refreshingly out of sync with contemporary life, which is Tyler's point.

Noah's Compass
by Anne Tyler
Knopf, 288 pp., $25.95

Known for her quirky characters, Tyler writes about middle-class people trying to endure life in Baltimore. With off-the-beaten-path jobs and no particular aspirations to better themselves, they're perilously close to stereotypes. But Tyler is generally able to bring them alive through attention to details, conversational prose, and her genius for dialogue. Indeed, Tyler's dialogue tends to resonate like poetry. Multiple meanings jump out from carefully detailed lines. The narrative advances as characters understand (or misunderstand) the implications of what is being said and what is implied. Readers get the point and often smile as the characters bumble through one tragicomic episode after another.

As *Noah's Compass* opens, Liam is moving into a smaller apartment after being downsized out of his job. He considers himself ready for the last stage of life. For him, this means sitting alone in his apartment and reading a good book once in a while. He thinks he's "reached the very end of the line" and feels only "a mild stirring curiosity" about what comes next. He doesn't have any Hamlet to-be-or-not-to-be moments. If anything, Liam seems more like J. Alfred Prufrock, although he doesn't worry about eating peaches and rolling his trousers as much as he thinks about correcting people's grammar. He actually keeps a journal devoted to listing examples of dangling modifiers from the hometown newspaper.

We soon learn that he's been living a downsized existence for most of his adult life. A philosophy major, he studied for his doctorate but dropped out before completing his dissertation and wound up teaching history to fifth graders at a private school. His first wife was a suicide, and his second wife filed for divorce. He has a flimsy relationship with his three daughters, his grandson, his elderly father, his stepmother, and his sister. Now that his dead-end teaching career has ended, he plans to spend his twilight years in a rocking chair.

But fate (in the form of a robber) knocks him over the head and renders him unconscious. When he awakens in a hospital, he cannot remember what happened to him and gradually realizes that he has lost or repressed large chunks of his life. When he meets 38-year-old Eunice Dunstead—who works as a "rememberer" for Ishmael Cope, an elderly gentleman in the early stages of Alzheimer's—Liam sees her as the answer to his dilemma.

With Liam's introverted tendencies, it's a stretch to imagine him having a passionate affair with Eunice. Their relationship is definitely low-key partly because of the presence of Liam's teenage daughter, Kitty. Liam's one intense moment with Eunice ends when Kitty comes into the room without knocking. Deciding to move in with her patsy of a dad, Kitty is anything but guileless. Plucky and conniving, she has more gumption and color than the other characters and is a bright spot in Liam's drab life.

Eunice, another bright spot, is a misfit. She's reminiscent of Delia Grinstead, the runaway wife who works as a sort of nanny in Tyler's earlier novel *Ladder of Years*. Her frizzy hair, lack of fashion sense, unattractive glasses, and ugly shoes make her dowdy and almost clown-like. But Liam is no prize himself. He resembles Ben Joe Hawkes, the protagonist of Tyler's first novel, *If Morning Ever Comes*. Not only is he cut from Hawkes's dull colorless mold, he's also experienced similar life-changing events, including the loss of his father, who left the family to marry his administrative assistant.

Liam and Eunice's affair does not run smoothly—not just because Eunice dresses poorly, doesn't want to be seen in public with Liam, and speaks in dangling modifiers. No, the two face a much more serious problem when Liam learns

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Eunice's secret; ultimately, their complex love story poses an uphill battle. Even though everyone tells Liam that he must first look out for his own happiness regardless of how this affects others, he comes to a different conclusion. Liam's handling of this moral dilemma offers a brave stance for a contemporary novel. But a story about doing the right thing isn't necessarily entertaining. That's especially true if the main character isn't big enough to handle the soul-searching ramifications of his actions.

And Liam doesn't seem to be that big. He does the right thing, but we never know how he feels or why he feels that way. His second wife left him because she thought he wasn't forthcoming. And he isn't. Unfortunately, Tyler portrays these characters in quick and facile pencil sketches. If Liam has an interior life, we never know about it because Tyler never gets inside his psyche. And while a light touch might work with a character facing a less momentous decision, it seems almost glib here, and it doesn't fit with the conflict that Liam faces. He isn't a Prince Hamlet, but he should have been. ♦

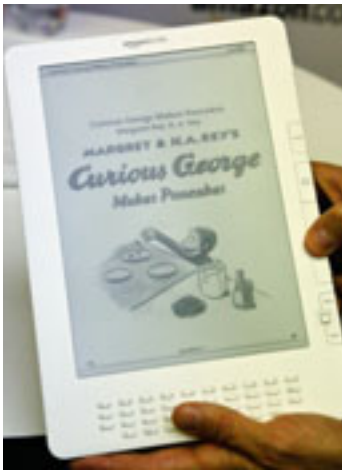
B&A

Biblionline

The translation of the printed word into cyberspace.

BY JAMES GARDNER

For a time there, it looked as if e-readers would be a dismal, faddish flop. It was hard to argue with the preliminary assessment of Steve Jobs: "It doesn't matter how good or bad the product is, the fact is that people don't read anymore. Forty percent of the people in the U.S. read one book or less last year. The whole conception is flawed."



JAMES LEYNSE

In the decade before the Sony e-reader arrived in 2006, one heard persistent rumors about electronic books. But beyond a few propeller-headed enthusiasts who had to have the latest gadget, the whole issue was a bore. Then Sony brought out the first successfully marketed e-reader and, to most people, it was still a bore. Only in the past year-and-a-half, with the nimble marketing of Amazon's Kindle, have e-readers finally become sexy—so sexy in fact that now Apple has gotten into the act. Last week, they unveiled the iPad, whose large touchscreen interactivity may well revolutionize both the act of reading and print media as we know them. Suddenly you find people in the subway or on the beach peering into these gadgets, which have started to weave themselves into the fabric of our culture.

And yet, for all that, it is difficult for most people to see the "killer app" in e-readers, the one new feature that a sizeable segment of the population will feel it cannot live without. To be sure, reading is nice—if you like that sort of thing—but the sewn codex that has been the vector of the written word for much of the past 19 centuries performs its function admirably well. And while the prospect of getting the latest bestseller for half-price in electronic form is also nice, it is unlikely to make people see the imperative need to go out and buy this fairly expensive contraption (it sells for around $260).

Then there is the mounting chatter about a synergy between e-readers and newspapers that will increase the popularity of the former while saving the latter at the same time. But even that, though highly desirable, is unlikely to be the killer app.

But in the meantime, within the context of that dreary assessment, the e-reader already possesses, for some of us, an unanticipated flash of pure sublimity, one that has been universally overlooked. Assuming that you love to read, and assuming that your main area of interest is older literature, then the e-reader, as it exists today, is already one of the most awe-inspiring implements ever invented for the advancement of human knowledge.

As of now, the Library of Alexandria is at your finger-tips, a click away on the world wide web. And there is no better or more convenient way to use it than through the medium of an e-reader. Reading on a screen is onerous, and printing up a thousand pages of text is ridiculous, not to mention costly. But the e-reader allows you to carry around and to hold in your hand upwards of 500 volumes which, through the ingenious expedient of electronic ink, have the look and feel of an actual book. Virtually all of world literature, historiography, and philosophy published prior to 1923 (when contemporary copyright laws kick in) is now available for free in word documents or PDF files somewhere on the Internet. Not only the breadth, but also the depth, of what is available today is staggering and humbling.

Consider Project Gutenberg, which ranks with Wikipedia as one of the noblest institutions ever created for the dissemination of knowledge and the refinement of the human mind. In the past 24 hours (as of this writing), the site has added 11 volumes to a

James Gardner recently translated Vida's Christiad *(I Tatti Renaissance Library).*

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roster that has swollen to over 30,000 texts, all available for free. Among these new works are two novels by Willkie Collins, a tragedy in verse by Benjamin Disraeli (!), and a collection of stories (in German) by the eminent Biedermeier novelist Adalbert Stifter. Consider also that, even within the context of these authors' oeuvres, most of the aforementioned works are so obscure as to be out of print. These newest additions join 40 other titles by Collins, 20 others by Disraeli, and three by Stifter that are already on the Project Gutenberg site. And while the site has relatively few works by Stifter compared with its offerings of Disraeli and Collins (because it favors English authors and books in English), it still offers a great many works in other languages, among them Afrikaans, Aleut, Arapaho, Breton, and Bulgarian.

To remedy the deficiencies (relatively speaking) in Project Gutenberg's foreign language offerings, it helps to go to sites linked to the national libraries of the languages in question. Even if you can't read a word of Spanish, you ought to feel awe before the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes. The 17th-century dramatist Lope de Vega is in all likelihood the most prolific dramatist in human history: He is estimated to have written over 1,800 plays, of which the site offers 425—because only 425 of these plays survive. The site offers similar depth for authors like Tirso de Molina and Quevedo, who were scarcely less prolific than Lope. And there are sites every bit as good for German, Catalan, Italian, and French literature. Even if you don't read Russian, it is nice to know that every surviving syllable of Tolstoy, that prolific titan, is available on one website, from his novels and journalism to his diaries and correspondence.

Regarding dead languages like Latin, Ancient Greek, and Sanskrit, things are even better. Every scrap of Latin that survives from antiquity is available online, as are most medieval texts. Meanwhile, the estimable Dana F. Sutton of the University of California, Irvine, has assembled the Philological Museum which, over the past 10 years, has assembled links to more than 33,000 Latin texts written during or since the Renaissance, an astounding number given that it probably represents half of all the texts ever published in Latin in that period.

The Gutenberg Press

Taken altogether, the result of this torrent of texts is a revolution in the interaction of the individual and world literature. Now the great corpus of world literature, rather than being something you purchase in single, costly installments, becomes a kind of glowing mass that is out there in the ether, available to everyone everywhere, at all times and at no cost, a thing as freely available as air or water or sunlight.

Many of these texts, it is true, are in PDF files which, to date, e-readers have been very bad at accommodating. That is a shame, since all of the texts scanned by Google Books are in this form. The issue, however, has largely been solved by the newest version of the Amazon Kindle, whose screen is far larger and looks much better than the earliest version. And now the iPad is the first e-reader to offer color, a major step in their merging with newspapers and magazines.

Another overlooked glory of the e-reader is that it permits you to create your own personalized edition of the work in question. You can append an introductory essay or the author's entry from Wikipedia, add annotations that are also available online, or add whatever other texts and commentaries you please.

There are those who will lament the gradual passing of the physical book as an institution and work of art. And there will also be some who will decry the e-reader on the grounds that it cheapens the act of reading. It is true that the more difficult it is to obtain a text, the more we cherish it once it is acquired. When only two copies of Lucretius existed in 14th-century Europe, and when you had to trek across an entire continent just to read it, surely you valued the opportunity more than most of us can imagine today. But that must not detract from the infinitely greater service to culture and to the study of world literature that comes from the prospect of having these works available to us for free at any moment and in any land. ♦

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B&A

Syncopated Eye

Manny Farber's criticism was art in itself.

BY SONNY BUNCH

Of the great mid-century film critics, Manny Farber (1917-2008) remains one of the most challenging and best loved. An all-purpose critic as comfortable writing about paintings and jazz music as film and television, Farber's dense criticism and staccato bursts of oddly juxtaposed adjectives imbued his words with a sort of lyricism. When people argue that criticism is an art form, they are referring to the writings of men like Manny Farber.

Farber on Film
The Complete Film Writings of Manny Farber
edited by Robert Polito
Library of America, 1,000 pp., $40

It helped, too, that he was an actual artist, a painter whose work is celebrated in museums with the same reverence cinephiles regard his criticism. Indeed, one of his reasons for giving up writing about film in 1977, at the relatively youthful age of 60, was that he "no longer wanted to be viewed as the film critic who also paints." Farber treated the written form like he treated canvases, and like the '20s jazz masters treated music: juxtaposing disparate words in a way both cluttered and syncopated. There's a distinctive rhythm to his writing. Consider his 1971 take on *Touch of Evil*:

> Basically it's a movie about terrorizing, an evil-smelling good movie in which the wildly Baroque terror and menace is another world from Hawks-Walsh: an aggressive-dynamic-robust-excessive-silly universe with Welles's career-long theme (the corruption of the not-so-innocent Everyman through wealth and power) and his inevitable efforts with space—to make it prismatic and a quagmire at the same time.

Before cracking open this mammoth new compendium of Farber's film writings—*all* of Farber's film writings—it's important to devise a course of attack, a stratagem to digest the beast. Like most such massive collections—David Thomson's thousand-page behemoths *Have You Seen . . . ?* and *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* are soulmates of *Farber on Film*—traversing the pages from front to back in the order they are presented is a fool's errand. *Farber on Film* is best absorbed piecemeal: Savor first the longer essays that lay out his vision of filmmaking and criticism before nibbling on the shorter pieces that examined whatever was spooling through movie house projectors between 1942 and 1977.

Indeed, it's almost essential to start with the legendary critic's most renowned essays—"The Gimp," "Hard-Sell Cinema," "Underground Films," and "White Elephant Art vs. Termite Art"—before doubling back to the beginning, armed with a fuller understanding of Farber's perspective. As editor Robert Polito notes in his informative introduction, doing so gives one a much better sense of Farber's evolution as a critic and writer. For example, the following passage gets to the heart of what Farber appreciated about "termite" art, as opposed to the elephantine prestige pictures studios were increasingly churning out:

> It sums up much of what a termite art aims at: buglike immersion in a small area without point or aim, and, over all, concentration on nailing down one moment without glamorizing it, but forgetting this accomplishment as soon as it has been passed; the feeling that all is expendable, that it can be chopped up and flung down in a different arrangement without ruin.

Farber wrote that in 1962. One of the joys of this collection is tracing his thoughts back through the decades and picking up on the theoretical continuities in his writing. Keep that passage in mind when reading this one, from a 1943 essay on *Shadow of a Doubt*:

> The trouble with the movies is that they so seldom get below the surface of a story and its characters, that their whole is rarely as good as the parts, and the characters of their players—Gary Cooper or Margaret Sullivan, for instance—are usually more powerful than the characters they play.

The fascination with getting under the surface is what drives Farber. He's not interested in the "big picture" pictures that devolve into ham-fisted diatribes about whatever cause is popular at the moment. In "The Gimp" (1952), he criticized the use of artistic trickery to draw attention to the oh-so-clever director and his oh-so-noble intentions:

> Over the past couple of years, one movie after another has been filled with low-key photography, shallow perspectives, screwy pantomime, ominously timed action, hollow-sounding voices. All this pseudo-undershot stuff, swiped from any and every "highbrow" work of films, painting, literature, has gone into ultraserious movies that express enough discontent with capitalist society to please any progressive.

Farber's occasional lapses into reactionary vitriol are all the more delicious since he was a man of the left, having applied for membership in the Communist Party in his twenties and serving as film critic for publications like the *New Republic* and the *Nation*. Refusing to get swept up by a film's message is a lost trait he shared with other giants of the period: Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael would occasionally betray a similar contempt for moralizing at the movies—a far cry from modern critics who heap praise on James Cameron's *Avatar* explicitly *because* of its overt left/liberal/religio/environmental silliness.

In an age when criticism has come to be seen as an expendable luxury—it's pleasant to recall the age of Manny Farber, when a challenging writer was encouraged to treat popular culture with the seriousness it deserves. ♦

Sonny Bunch writes on culture and politics at the blog Conventional Folly.

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"Still, [health care reform] is a complex issue, and the longer it was debated, the more skeptical people became. I take my share of the blame for not explaining it more clearly to the American people."
—Barack Obama, January 27, 2010

THE WHITE HOUSE
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

For Immediate Release, February 2, 2010

Remarks by the President and the Vice President at Town Hall Meeting
University of Akron Memorial Hall, Akron, Ohio

(cont'd)

does not include Viagra. Next question, please.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President. My question is about quality of care. How will your proposals change the way someone without insurance will be treated in a hospital? Could that person still be turned away?

THE PRESIDENT: We all remember what happened to our friend Humpty Dumpty. He sat on a wall. He had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again because he lacked insurance. Humpty was turned away. But under my health reform plan, Humpty can receive the treatment he needs, including physical therapy. Assuming, of course, Humpty is not staying in this country illegally.

QUESTION: Mr. President, with so many obstacles in the way, don't you think it is time to shelve your health reform agenda for now and focus one hundred percent on jobs?

THE PRESIDENT: Now that, my friend, is a false choice—something I'll explain later. But when it comes to health care, I am determined. I recently learned about an itsy-bitsy spider who climbed up a water spout. Down came the rain and washed the spider out. Out came the sun and dried up all the rain. And the itsy-bitsy spider came up the spout again. I am the itsy-bitsy spider. And no amount of Republican rain will stop me from fighting for your health! (Applause.)

QUESTION: I am concerned, Mr. President, about the possibility that those who choose to be uninsured will be forced to join a government-run provider or pay a penalty. What about freedom of choice?

THE PRESIDENT: You may think you are healthy and you don't need health insurance. But may I remind you that anything can happen to you at any time and when you least expect it. Two friends of mine, Jack and Jill, went up a hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after. It was a horrific event. Both were in need of catastrophic care and faced the possibility of months in the hospital. So trust me on this one. Now how about a question for the vice president?

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, I am a firefighter who is recovering from—

THE VICE PRESIDENT: —No! Fire bad! Fire very bad!

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